

# *Mr. Obama, I Hate the “N” Word*

by

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During a pod-cast last week, President Obama used a racial slur to make a point about race relations in the USA. He used the “N” word. Now I doubt there is anyone who reads this devotional who doesn’t know what I am referencing by not spelling it out. To me, it is just too offensive to do so. So, I must send out a message to Mr. Obama to tell him how I feel:

*“Mr. President, I hate the use of this word, whether it is myself using it, another white man using it, a black man using it, or the President of the United States, who happens to be black, who uses it. You need to understand what is at stake, for this is an example of why we have continued divisions within this Nation, and why hatred and unforgiveness remains with us. It is time to allow this Country to change and heal, and what you did does not allow either. What were you thinking?”*

Why do I have such a strong conviction on this issue? I grew up in Mississippi, as a normal white, Southern boy. Typical of my era in the South, was to hear the “N” word a lot. I am sorry to say that I repeated my friend’s use of the word, and joined right in there with them. As a child, and as a young adult, I didn’t have any black friends. So, it was easy enough to think it was just our deal. It was a private thing, between kids. No one was being hurt, or so I thought. It wasn’t until I grew into my thirties and forties that this would change and I would get to know people whose color was darker than mine. You see, describing the tint to a person’s skin like this, instead of stereotyping him, was a milestone for me because I came to understand that it is only skin pigmentation that makes the difference. I discovered that we have many, if not most things in common. We both have things we love and dislike. We have similar ambitions. Things that made these men and women cry because of loss of loved ones, or pain, or fears, made me cry as well when I had the same fear, or loss, or pain. Even though my skin pigmentation was lighter than theirs, I came to see things that tint of skin doesn’t divide. So, understand that it isn’t skin color that divides us. It is misunderstanding each other, and continuing agitation by those who have an agenda to keep racial divisions an issue in this Country. So, I began to listen to the pain and anger that racial slurs brought to the people with a slightly darker shade of hue than mine, and I began to feel their pain, for I knew I too would have felt it as well. Now, let me go deeper with how God taught me first hand to hate the “N” word, and the prejudice that inspires its use.

It was the summer of 1967 and I was about to leave to go to rookie camp for the St. Louis Football Cardinals. After four years of college football, I was motivated and ready to prove myself in the NFL. But,

before I could go, something would happen that would end my professional career before it started. It proved to be one of the most challenging times of my life, and it also changed the course of my life ... maybe even for the better. This thing I speak of would come through the shotguns of white supremacists, as they emptied their buckshot through every window in my family's home, and into their car. You see, these evil men were trying to force my father to see things their way, and if he did not, they would threaten our family's lives until he did. Why did they do this? How could they have hated my father so much that they would do such a thing? Was this hatred because my family and I were black? No, we were a typical white family. Was it because we were "Freedom Fighters" who came to town as political activists and stirred them up? No, my dad was a blue color worker in a manufacturing plant where he had worked as a fireman for over thirty years. Did they hate him because he was what they called a "N – Lover," and they had a beef with him because of it? No, not for that reason either. My father did not hate a black person because of his color, but he was not an activist by any stretch of an imagination. You would think these things could have been the motive for their hate crime against my family, since they were the same people who burned crosses, houses and churches, simply because of skin pigmentation that was a little darker than theirs. No, my father's offense was to go against their attempt to control him, by crossing the strike line of an illegal union strike, and to return to his own job. That's what did it, and this brought on their wrath.

My father had submitted to this strike for four months, as any union member was forced to do. The union leaders at that time were the same hoodlums who were known as leaders in the KKK in the area. Therefore, being a man of conscience, it was hard for my dad to stick with it, as was also the case with most of the people who worked there. Another fact was that the strike was illegal, a knee jerk reaction by some hotheaded leaders whose friend was fired. The company would not give in, rightfully so, and to put pressure on the company, those union bosses began blowing up power lines going into the plant. Later, when that didn't work, they began throwing things at the guards and the "scabs" who were taking their jobs. When that didn't work, they began killing people with rifles and roadside attacks when they drove home. It was then that a crisis developed in my father, with whether he could continue to honor his union status by following these criminal leaders. Everything these leaders of his union were doing was wrong, and he was against. Being a quiet, but strong man, he didn't speak out, but he chose rather to act out his convictions by crossing the union barricade. He was not political. He was not trying to prove one thing. He simply went back to work to his old job, and when he did, it began a landslide of other disgruntled union employees who later followed him and broke the backbone of the strike. But, it wasn't until after our home was nearly destroyed that people began to see that hate and ignorance was the cause of that strike, not a labor dispute. It was not a needed union action, or even white supremacist ideology that drove it. Hate and ignorance was the cause of our home being invaded and my family almost being killed. Therefore, it was the hatred by these men that caused me to hate everything they represented, and needless to say, I began to hate their favorite expression, which was the "N" word. Thank God, He taught me to hate the works they did and hate what they represented, but not hate them. Jesus made it clear to me that vengeance was His and not mine. Before the strike, the hatred and ignorance of these men had found a convenient place to vent itself, by targeting people

with a slightly darker shade of hew than theirs. But now, my white family was their target, and I felt the pain of a black man.

My family and I had our own ignorance of black people, and that is why I had used the “N” word without compassion before the attack. I had never stopped to ask why the black people in the area were frightened, angry, and suspicious of certain white people, ... that is ... until my family and I became a target of the same white thugs who had been threatening them. Then it became a horse of a different color, if you will pardon my pun. In fact, it wasn’t about color. It was about hate looking for a cause to vent it, plain and simple. It was about not understanding other people, nor wanting to understand why one man would see things differently from another. It was about trying to control what they did not understand, and what they feared. The fact that someone is raised in a different culture doesn’t mean his culture is bad, or he doesn’t love his culture any less than you love yours, or that yours is better. The fact that anyone would try to force his will over another man illegally, ethically or ethnically to gain an advantage over him to control him is wrong, no matter the culture or color. Whether it is a white empowerment movement against blacks, or a black empowerment movement against whites, it is wrong, wrong, wrong, and there is now wrong on both sides of that coin, because hate and prejudice is not restricted to only one color. It is now on both sides. So I ask:

*“Mr. President, when will our political leaders get this about our Country? When will you get it? Do you not see that by using a racial slur, or any other agitating verbiage to make a point, as you say, is no less offensive even though you are black and you feel you have the right to do so? Do you not see that continuing this rhetoric to stir people up to get votes or drive a political agenda, rather than using your leadership to heal a nation, is a neglect and abuse of power? The problem we have between the races in this Country will not be solved with political reform or education, or keeping people angry. At the core of this Country’s racial problems is an evil that must be defeated another way. May I present it, or better said give you an example?”*

I read that the South Carolina Governor, who happens to have a lighter shade of skin pigment and is Republican, has called for the removal of the Confederate Flag from the State’s Capitol Building. Way to go Governor! That’s good, and a right way to use your leadership! I bet you had to go against some of those thugs who use that flag to stir up hate, didn’t you? It took courage on your part to do the right thing. You lost their votes, but so what, you did the right thing. I applaud you, and therefore I must say to our President:

*“Mr. Obama, although you may want to say it was because of your leadership, and your willingness to “stir things up that made this happen in South Carolina, I would invite you, Sir, to look a little more deeply at what caused this change of heart. You will discover a force that inspired change as nothing else can, and this force is love, not hate, and it certainly did not come through political agitation. Got your attention? Here is where we see the kind of leadership that changes hearts. Now, read carefully:*

After nine black people lost their lives in the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, because they simply had a darker pigmentation to their skin and a man who hated them because of it killed them, how did the grieving friends and family respond? Did they get up in arms? Did they burn their neighborhoods and get political leaders in town down to stomp their hatred? Did they even listen to those voices? No they did not. Not these precious people. Instead, even through their tears and great loss, they showed love. They gave forgiveness. They would not embrace hate. They would not answer a fool according to his ways, as the Bible instructs us to do. They demonstrated their faith. They even told the man who killed their family members and friends to turn to God for forgiveness, and find hope. These people and their love and forgiveness won our hearts, and I tell you, Mr. Obama, it was their faith in God that empowered their perspective. Sir, it is the faith of the people of this Nation of all colors who need to step up to lead in its healing. This kind of leadership will heal this Country, no matter the color of the pigmentation. So, if you want to use any phrase and your influence to make a point, why not use love, not hate ... forgiveness, rather than harboring a generational grudge, and best of all, lead the charge with the faith you say you have. It is time that you be a leader who leads us to God to find the healing we need, rather than keeping the wounds irritated.

*Mr. President, I hate the "N" word, and I would ask you and other political leaders, whether they be black or white, red or yellow, or whatever blend of beautiful colors they represent, to end this continued agitation between our races just to get votes, or to drive a political agenda. There is something critically wrong with what is being done to our people and our Nation by what is being done in Washington. It must end before it is too late.*