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“Should the Late George Floyd Be a Black American Hero?”

Should the late George Floyd be a Black American hero? Do you want future generations to glance back over their shoulders and view Mr. Floyd as a leading symbol in the fight for Black American freedom, justice, and equality?

Mr. Floyd lost his life under unappealing and unpleasant circumstances. He was murdered with his hands cuffed behind his back and he was face down on the pavement because of an alleged and unresolved use of a counterfeit \$20 bill to purchase cigarettes.¹ How should Mr. Floyd be compared with the innumerable Black American personalities who have lost their lives in the fight for justice over the past 400-plus years?

Before proceeding, it is important to note—as have many involved in Mr. Floyd’s case—that the penalty for passing a counterfeit \$20 bill is **not** death. Importantly, the State of Minnesota should resolve the issue and clarify the facts concerning Mr. Floyd’s alleged use of counterfeit money. Unfortunately, the lack of resolution of this

matter places a dark cloud over the entire affair.

Let us also emphasize that the videotape of Mr. Floyd’s murder fastened a very bright spotlight on police brutality, police excessive use of force, and police operations generally. That spotlight is affecting police operations all around the world, and it should result in more humane police behavior. But there are no guarantees until improved police governance laws are enacted and enforced.

Precipitating all of these outcomes, alone, should make Mr. Floyd an excellent Black American hero candidate. However, there are at least three reasons why Mr. Floyd’s ascension to herohood should be reconsidered.

First, if Mr. Floyd, in fact, knowingly passed counterfeit money as alleged, then it represents a criminal act.² As a people intent on being righteous, Black Americans should not tolerate criminal behavior.

¹ As of July 19, 2021, and our contact with the Minnesota Attorney General’s office, the counterfeit \$20 bill issue was not resolved. Also, see Nicholas Bogel-Burroughs and Will Wright’s “Little has been said about the \$20 bill that brought officers to the scene,” *The New York Times* (041921),

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/19/us/george-floyd-bill-counterfeit.html>; (Retrieved 071421).

² It is worth mentioning that in the press account highlighted in footnote 1, the Cup Foods attendant who accepted the \$20 bill stated that Mr. Floyd seemed to not be aware that the money was counterfeit.

Second, if Mr. Floyd believed or knew that he had not committed a crime, then why did he acquiesce so willingly to the police and go down without a fight. His failure to fight in righteous indignation may have cost him his life, but he died anyway.

Third, Mr. Floyd's final cry to his mother for help places him in the pantheon of weaklings who do not fight in moments of distress, but who digress to babyhood. This weakness, as Dr. Claud Anderson so aptly states, is a prime reason why Black Americans have been used and abused—especially economically—throughout our sojourn in North America.³ It is peculiar that Mr. Floyd, who was big and football-strong, was putty in the hands of Minneapolis police.

In the current fight over Critical Race Theory, we should be careful not only about how we characterize the history of Blacks in America, but we should also be very careful about who we hold up to the world as heroes. We should consider continuing to push forward as heroes the lives and legacies of personalities such as Gabriel Prosser, Denmark Vesey, Nat Turner, Medgar Evers, and Martin Luther King, Jr. Much less so Mr. George Floyd.

B. Robinson
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³ See Chapter 4 of Dr. Claud Anderson's (1994), *Black Labor White Wealth: The Search for Power*

and Economic Justice. Duncan & Duncan; Edgewood, MD.