

---

UCF Forum

---

9-23-2020

## Are We As Great If Our Nation Is Built On Hate?

Syretta Spears

Find similar works at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/ucf-forum>

Information presented on this website is considered public information (unless otherwise noted) and may be distributed or copied. Use of appropriate byline/photo/image credit is requested. We recommend that UCF data be acquired directly from a UCF server and not through other sources that may change the data in some way. While UCF makes every effort to provide accurate and complete information, various data such as names, telephone numbers, etc. may change prior to updating.

---

This Opinion column is brought to you for free and open access by STARS. It has been accepted for inclusion in UCF Forum by an authorized administrator of STARS. For more information, please contact [STARS@ucf.edu](mailto:STARS@ucf.edu).



# Are We As Great If Our Nation Is Built On Hate?

By Syretta Spears  
UCF Forum columnist

Wednesday, September 23, 2020

Making this country great begins with America's heritage of openness to all and promoting tolerance for our differences.



(iStock photo)

Each day as our world evolves, we are witness to momentous, and at times, senseless and detestable moments in our country and the world's center stage.

As some of the more heinous events unfold, we often find the same underlying factor: hate. Ever disheartened by current affairs (and thinking back on a myriad of tragedies

bygone) the world seems fairly clear of its feelings with regards to people of color – specifically Black people.

The question I pose is why? Brutally forced from African shores into slave ships, auctioned and sold as merchandise for economic gain in America, collectively what did Black people do to deserve such disdain and aggression when they have been the oppressed and non-aggressor?

For generations, Black people endured the unthinkable: forced labor, having their infant children used as alligator bait, mothers and children being separated for the sake of being sold for the highest bid and being subjected to inhumane living conditions – injustices that others could only imagine. Over time, there would be glimmers of hope, freedom from slavery, then alienation through segregation (the Jim Crow era). In southern states, laws would pass to alienate Blacks from every aspect of life – “WHITES ONLY.” And across the country there was redlining of neighborhoods.

Transformative calls to action can often be as simple as starting with one act of common courtesy toward others we see as different.

Always striving for a brighter future, turning lemons into lemonade, Blacks begin creating their own societies. These communities were self-sufficient, flourishing peacefully and economically until once again the faces of outside hatred devastated entire communities using tongues, bombs and gunfire.

I could carry on with similar stories that continue to re-emerge, even in present day, demonstrating that hatred, sadly, remains alive and flourishing.

Still pondering where hate derived and why it’s still so prevalent, we should recall that human beings have witnessed more than 400 years of actions that shaped many people’s views of Black people as being inferior and whites as being a superior race. Even more disparaging, many racist views questioned if Blacks were completely evolved at some point. That said, the world is ingrained with the ideology that Black people are not equals and also labeled as aggressive and “barbaric.” Having such labels placed upon a collective and being branded into America’s psyche can be almost impossible to overcome.

Through centuries of inhumane treatment, people of color have continued to endure acts of hate, physical violence, denial of civil rights, and healthcare discrimination, to name a few. Rather than continue to dwell on acts so devastating and destructive, to move forward America must acknowledge its past and realize that hate is a real, seductive and incontestable emotion. America must get comfortable with being uncomfortable about its past to understand how centuries of hate have incited mistreatment, violence and calls to action, negative and/or positive.

Those transformative calls to action can often be as simple as starting with one act of common courtesy toward others we see as different. Even more transformational, a conversation (perhaps one on one) of understanding about different cultures and

experiences to even begin to understand that one's biases and hate is learned and not truth.

*“No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.” – Nelson Mandela*

It is my perspective that if we focus on root causes, and stop dwelling on symptoms of hate, we can begin to see the social inappropriateness of hate and how this unacknowledged and destructive emotion continues to hinder this country from being as great as it can truly be.

In our country's current landscape, some exclaim we're moving forward on this front. From where I sit, as a person of color, it appears that we are certainly not moving quickly in that direction, but the very opposite – and that is catastrophic on many levels.

All hateful antics aside, we need a social contract, a pledge between individuals detailing what we should do for each other, starting with common decency as human beings. Race aside, see one another as you would see yourself, family and/or friends. The same should be said for our country (common decency), giving honor to ALL that have made this country what it is and optimistically can be. We should figure out how to begin and continue civil conversations and focus on establishing solid relationships with those we see as being our enemies and the subject of our hate; staring down and confronting the country's ultimate demons – race, intolerance and silence.

Making this country great begins with America's heritage of openness to all and promoting tolerance for our differences. We need to learn from one another and remember that our silence is not always golden; stand up and speak out against hate.

***Syretta Spears*** is assistant director of the UCF Simulation, Technology, Innovation and Modeling Center in the College of Nursing. She can be reached at [Syretta.Spears@ucf.edu](mailto:Syretta.Spears@ucf.edu).