
Aggression Catalyzes Racism from Spike Lee's Movie, Do the Right Thing

Does aggression help a situation improve, or only make it worse? Similar to the effect of one domino pushing down the next, acts of aggression and violence prove to only create more issues one after another. Why people choose to become violent while taking a stand is a big predicament in America, and is shown throughout Spike Lee's movie, *Do The Right Thing*. This film depicts what racism was like in the cities of New York during the eighties and the aggression that comes with it. Once one member of a community decides to become violent, others almost always join in. While they believe they're defending themselves, they are only creating more problems. This movie is a great representation of what America dealt with not only in the eighties, but even today. To *Do The Right Thing* in regards to people of different race, aggression is never the answer because it creates a domino effect of violence.

Throughout the story of *Do The Right Thing*, there was serious aggression between races, which ultimately caused the inevitable result of violence in the city. Two important characters, Buggin' Out (played by Giancarlo Esposito) and Radio Raheem (Bill Nunn) find that they both have an issue with Sal (Danny Aiello) and his pizzeria. Buggin' Out creates a problem in Sal's pizzeria because there are only photographs of white celebrities hanging on the wall. He wants to feel a sense of equality when he walks in. When he goes to grab a slice of pizza, he wants to feel welcomed into the store, but instead he feels as though Sal and his sons are racist. Sal is clearly in disagreement about the photos, claiming that it's an Italian pizzeria so only Italian figures are hanging on the wall. However, Buggin' Out makes the argument that all of Sal's customers are African American and he should be trying to please the community more. Radio Raheem clearly has a passion for the music that escapes his boombox and the song, "Fight the Power" by Public Enemy but Sal makes a problem out of it by telling him to turn the music off while he's in the pizzeria. While Sal started out with respect it quickly turned to aggression, which obviously infuriated Radio Raheem. Sal wanted peace and quiet in his pizzeria, which is reasonable, however, the way he handled the situation made the problem even worse. If Sal wants to keep serving his customers, he should be more willing to work with them. Now, he is creating a problem with Radio Raheem and Buggin' Out, who will most likely tell other people, making it seem like Sal isn't loyal to his customers.

Many of the characters in the film make poor quick decisions that create an uproar of aggression, which lead to a domino effect of violence and even death. Radio Raheem and Buggin' Out attempt a boycott in Sal's pizzeria because of the prior experiences Radio Raheem entered the store blasting his boombox with the song, "Fight the Power." Obviously

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infuriated, Sal reacts without thinking of the consequences; he began screaming in Radio Raheem's face, and made the decision to break the radio with a bat. This caused Raheem to start fighting Sal, which was only beginning of the domino effect. Everyone in the pizzeria began fighting with each other, quickly taking it outside, where the entire community joined in. Mobs of people all pushing, punching, and kicking until the police soon arrived. However, the police make the situation even worse by grabbing Radio Raheem and choking him with their baton. They never stop, even while people all around are begging them too. There were so many other options; they could have retrained or tased him but instead they choose murder. Unfortunately, Radio Raheem is killed by the cops, and even then the violence doesn't end, it only deepens. Soon enough, Mookie (Spike Lee) decides to throw a trash can into the window, letting all of the protesters rush in, destroying the pizzeria. By the end of the night, the store is up in flames, and everyone is in shock. This horrific end is the result of an aggressive domino effect, starting with the arguments with between Sal, Radio Raheem, and Buggin' Out. It's quite possible that if these initial predicaments didn't happen the outcome would have been different, but now the city will never know. They all made the decision to choose violence, which resulted in the death of a friend. If they had made a smarter choice on how to handle the problem, the outcome of the night would have been much different. Once one problem occurs it sets the stage for even more destruction.

A popular trend of choosing peace over violence between races began with a man named Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and can easily apply to the situation presented in Do The Right Thing. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., a well known activist during the civil rights movement who believed in peaceful protesting once said, "Violence as a way of achieving racial justice is both impractical and immoral. It is impractical because it is a descending spiral ending in destruction for all. The old law of an eye for an eye leaves everybody blind. It is immoral because it seeks to humiliate the opponent rather than win his understanding; it seeks to annihilate rather than to convert. Violence is immoral because it thrives on hatred rather than love. It destroys a community and makes brotherhood impossible. It leaves society in monologue rather than dialogue. Violence ends by defeating itself. It creates bitterness in the survivors and brutality in the destroyers." MLK said this in the sixties in hopes that segregation would end in the years to come, but even now it is still common. Moments of violence such as the horrors in Ferguson prove that aggression will only lead to a worse outcome. Michael Brown, an unarmed black teenager, was shot and killed on August. 9, 2014, by Darren Wilson, a white police officer, in Ferguson, Missouri.. This shooting initiated protests and riots that continued in the area for weeks. A few months later, the county prosecutor announced that a grand jury decided not to indict Mr. Wilson. The announcement set off another wave of protests, contained more shootings, riots, fires, and burglaries. Since Michael Brown was unarmed, the black community felt as though Mr. Wilson shot him with intent on killing him possibly because he was black. This created a stir in the suburb of St. Louis. African Americans were trying to stand up for their rights and were upset with the way the case was handled. Instead of attempting peaceful protests, many of

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them turned right to violence. Burning buildings and cars, looting stores, and hurting other people, they really weren't proving their point. Their violence only created a domino effect; the more the police tried to fight back, the more angry the protesters became, which continued to build up the aggression. While America will never know what could have happened if peaceful protests were used, it can be assumed the outcome would have been much better. Martin Luther King Jr. was correct when he said that "it is a descending spiral ending in destruction for all." Now, Ferguson, Missouri will be left in misery, with only destruction and deaths representing the horrors that happened following Michael Brown's shooting.

Conclusion:

"Do The Right Thing" is a perfect example of why aggression is never the answer to issues regarding race because it only makes the problem worse. It is seen in the sixties with Martin Luther King Jr., in the eighties film "Do The Right Thing," and sadly, even in today's society. Aggression on one side of the argument only makes the other side retaliate and make it even worse. This is why aggression resembles the domino effect, with the last domino being extreme violence.

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