
The Value of Black Life in Wesley Lowery's "They Can't Kill Us All"

Racial inequality has always been one of America's most evident but feared topics, creating tension and violence that many choose to ignore. However, Wesley Lowery completely disregards this notion and exhibits the brutally honest killings and injustice with his powerful writing and publications that highlight the discrimination the black community experience daily.

Born in Woodbridge, New Jersey, Lowery was raised in Shaker Heights, Ohio just near the coast of Lake Erie. Soon after his graduation in the Ohio University Scripps School of Journalism, he landed a successful position working at the Boston Globe; An American based newspaper founded and based in Boston. He has always been passionate about race-related incidents and acts of state violence, specifically in regard to the police force. His influence is not only limited to those who partake in journalistic reports but also reach younger audiences through social media, including Snapchat and Twitter. He has reported events such as the murder trial of the NFL's Aaron Hernandez and continued to lean towards more racial topics such as the Ferguson Protests in 2014. But, Lowery's most recognizable work is his reporting of the death of Michael Brown, an 18-year old Black male gunned down by a 28-year old white male police officer. He famously recorded the arrest of Brown, showcasing the raw and gritty reality of being a black man in America. He was arrested along with his friend, and promptly after his arrest published his experience of the account. He later went on to write and publish a book following his account on the Ferguson protests and death of Michael Brown by the title of "They Can't Kill Us All", and was awarded the 2017 Christopher Isherwood Prize for autobiographical prose by the Los Angeles Times Book Prizes. Throughout his career as a journalist, Lowery has achieved famous recognition and was granted the Pulitzer Prize for National Reporting, (2016), and the George Polk award (2016). Along with these accomplishments, he is also affiliated with the National Association of Black Journalists (2014). These accomplishments are only expected, as he has an immense understanding of political and social news, and clearly takes advantage of his effective writing to educate and articulate himself effectively about subjects relating to racism. The book's message is not a muddled one, the value of black life is the core material discussed throughout the book.

Lowery's interest began with him working and eating at McDonald's. One day, customers were suddenly forced to immediately clear out of the place following the acts of violence and protests in the city of Ferguson. Lowery was not able to exit quickly, and what followed was the definition of unjust treatment based on race. He was shoved against a soda dispenser and went through unreasonable arrestment. The treatment he underwent is an everyday reminder of the

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mistreatment of black bodies when it comes to law enforcement. And it's logical to word this as black bodies specifically instead of black people, at this point the inhumane treatment places them in an inferior position, treating them as bodies instead of people. When Lowery questioned the reasoning behind his arrest, he didn't get an appropriate response, rather, just an ignorant comment. When Lowery told one of the officers he'll be on the front page of the Washington Post, the officer replied with a smirk and said: "You're going to be sleeping in our jail cell tonight". Which is frustrating, these cops have a job to serve and protect the community, but rather do the complete opposite. "We live in a country where police violence is a pervasive fixture of daily life, not a problem plaguing some distant locale. "

The book's theme very clearly explores police violence and reflects on the black struggle in America. The fight for racial injustice isn't a new concept, especially in the United States, a country found on the blood and forced labor of Black and other minority groups. The fight against America's racial injustice movement today such as #BlackLivesMatter has its roots and origin in the Civil Right Movement. BLM continues the fight for racial equality and civil rights whether it's through rallies or demonstrations. In order to clearly better comprehend the status of BLM and Black activists in the modern day time, you have to look at a timeline of the injustices faced by African-Americans. The Civil Rights Movement period lasted from 1954-1968 and was a movement that fought for the equal treatment of black Americans compared to their white counterparts. This movement was a reaction to the rampant racism and violence towards said black Americans. During this era, there were many anti-black laws. An example of this is segregation, which perpetuated the idea of white superiority. Blacks were not permitted to physically be in the same restaurants or schools as whites, usually degrading black citizens to lower quality buildings with few resources. There was also lynching targeted at black people. These lynchings were not only committed by white supremacist groups but also mobs of white citizens. These lynchings were fairly common around the Civil Rights movement period and were dismissed by law authorities. These black victims were so dehumanized that public lynchings also commonly took place, for the whole town to witness. And despite the achievements of the Civil Rights Movement, we still see parallels that have happened decades ago that are still relevant today. Just like in the 1900's, white policemen are still unfairly detaining and killing black citizens today. The unjust shooting of Michael Brown isn't very different from the shooting of any other black youth only decades ago. Just like the Civil Rights Movement that started as a response to the lack of civil rights, Black Lives Matter is in response to the killings of unarmed black people, mass incarceration, and racism.

To reiterate, They Can't Kill Us All exceptionally explores the theme of racial justice and discrimination. All while making it understandable and relatable to a younger audience and connecting it to a historical era such as the Civil Rights Movement. Lowery's, They Can't Kill Us All is a work of art that should be used in schools across the nation to open the discussion of police violence and racial injustice in classrooms.

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