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# HOW THE SEC CHANGED CIVIL RIGHTS IN THE SOUTH

Charles Collomp  
ccollomp@murraystate.edu

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# HOW THE SEC CHANGED CIVIL RIGHTS IN THE SOUTH

Society today is very different from the late 1960s. We live in a very fast paced, complex world where if you are not trying everything to stay ahead of the curve, you're falling behind. We now have classes as a group to reflect on how to be a better person in society and character counts seminars in schools. Back in the late 1960s times were less troubled in many ways but surprisingly crime was not one of them. Left Call did a study that in the early '60s by percentage of population, this was one of the worst times for crime in the country. 1960 saw the second highest rate in every major crime category other than murder. This ranged from rape, assault, and burglary (Sutton, February 23, 2012). Social media was non-existent back then and news did not spread like it does in the present. Life seemed good in the "Mayberry" times, but that was only on the surface. People came to America to a land of opportunity, but that went into a new world that was unexpected. Many immigrants were treated poorly right when they reached The United States' shores. For decades people all around the world were leaving everything they ever knew to come to a place where you could pick your religion, have an equal opportunity no matter where your mom or dad came from and was able to make a living off the American Dream. This was not the case at all even 50 years ago. The South was raised in an era where slavery was abolished, but people of color were not equal. The bathrooms, water fountains, and even schools were segregated. It is hard to imagine a society that would rather spend tax dollars on building an all-white school to segregate from the rest of the population than put all resources together to make a place that would help excel everyone. Many resources in The United States, not just the South, were wasted due to people thinking one was better than their peer. We have come a long way since that time, but we have many different flaws as a society today.

The United States has had a long history and has advanced and overcome many obstacles. One barrier that has always been a major problem and war has even broken out over, is in its name itself, “United.” The U.S. has seen, corruption, turmoil, and bloodshed over race and yet we still have this same problem since the beginning when the first slaves were brought to Jamestown in 1619 (History.com Staff, n.d.). The good news is that America is trying to correct itself from its dark history. I decided to interview three extraordinary gentlemen who have seen parts of this dark history. Two are pioneers of Civil Rights in the 1960s and the other is a young man who is dealing issues of his own in the present-day South. They will shed light on these times and help us see truly how far we have come as a nation and if we are finely able to proudly say that we are The “United” States of America.

Condredge Holloway was the first African-American to play quarterback in the South Eastern Conference and was also the first black baseball player to play at the University of Tennessee. Condredge was born in the deep South. He was born in a time when much of this hate was still alive and unfortunately well. He was born in Mobile, Alabama which was a hub to a lot of the hate that ran along with Civil Rights. Parents like Condredges were bound and determined to make a change in this world and more, in particular, the deep South.

Dorothy Holloway was Condredge Jr's mother. She was born and raised in Limestone County in Alabama. She was one of four sisters that used to chop cotton in the hot Alabama sun to pay for things that they wanted to do as a group. She was a very determined young lady with drive and ambition. All four sisters had these traits and since she was the youngest, she had to try that much harder to be noticed. She did well with the resources she had given to her in a poor county like Limestone. She was hired by NASA to work in the Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville in 1962. Dorothy had the honor of being the first male or female African-American to

work for NASA. Condredge Jr's father was Condredge Holloway Sr. who was a great athlete as well. He played many sports and excelled at them all. He was a very hard worker but unfortunately was not able to take advantage of any opportunities he had as an athlete. He preached to his son at an early age don't let chances slip away like he once had. Condredge Jr. said he always took that to heart because his father had to work so hard just to make ends meet for his family.

Condredge Jr. was lucky to be born with the type of parents he had. He was born into an environment where the sky was the limit. He grew up thinking he had no restrictions and the answer “NO” was only a meaning of trying harder. Condredge Jr. did well in school and was pushed by his mother who was exceptionally gifted when it came to education. She pushed him in the books and his dad on the sports side of things. Holloway Jr. was seen as a threat because of his common sense and his knowledge, but just like today, it is incredible how sports change people’s perspective. Holloway Jr. was a gifted athlete, and he loved to compete. He played anything under the sun but excelled in baseball and football. He remembers telling his mom at an early age that he wanted to play baseball and football in college. He, in particular, told his parents he wanted to be a quarterback in college. His parents knew this had never been done by anyone of color, but of course, they did not detour him one bit. They put the tracks down in Civil Rights history and wanted Condredge Jr. to create his own path.

Condredge Holloway Jr. went on to play at Lee High School in Huntsville was an all African-American school and still is a predominately black today. Ironically this school was named after the Southern General Robert E. . Students this year have raised awareness and got a petition to be signed to change their high school’s name. (Vollers, 2017) Condredge Jr. loved his high school and he said in 1967 it was the best thing going for him. He was able to excel in

sports and school without worrying about the whole segregation thing going on in the outside world. He loved football and was good at being an athletic quarterback but everyone knew that there was no future in that. The kid was a star shortstop, and it was easy to see Condredge Jr. was going to get drafted.

Holloway Jr. was recruited by many schools. He was recruited for football and baseball. Many Universities wanted him to play just one sport but Condredge Jr. would have none of that. He was very prideful of his skill and he wanted to show the world how good he really was. This detoured some schools from reaching out again but many South Eastern Conference schools stayed on his trail.

After Condredge Jr. graduated from Lee High School, he had plenty of options for school and then the phone rang. Dorothy answered the phone and Condredge Jr. said he remembered his mother's face like it was yesterday, "she had a pleasant look on her face that slowly became confused as time passed and then out of nowhere she had an angry face. She put down the phone and said it was for me. Not knowing who it was I said hello cautiously and they told me they were representatives for the Montreal Expos and to let me know I had been drafted by them. I was so excited and could not wait. I got their information and told them I would call them back. Then I saw my mom's stern face and knew it was not going to be easy." Dorothy had no intention of letting her son go off to Canada and play Major League Baseball until he had a degree from a university. Little did Condredge Jr. know or Dorothy for that matter, that in the state of Alabama under the age of eighteen had to be signed by a legal guardian. That pretty much put an end to that right then and there. Montreal had selected Condredge Jr. with their first-round pick and fourth overall in the whole draft.

MLB was out of the picture for awhile and Condredge Jr. set his sights back on college recruiting. He had been in talks with the legendary coach himself Paul “Bear” Bryant who coached at The University of Alabama. Anybody knows that growing up in the state of Alabama in the 1960s and 1970s started and ended with Crimson Tide football. Bear Bryant was a hard-nosed coach that did not care about your personal life or your background but if you were going to play for him, you were going to straighten up. He had a movie made about his tough coaching style while he was at Texas A&M called The Junction Boys. Condredge Jr. talked about how he was so nervous the first time he talked to Bear Bryant. He said it was hard to look him straight in the eye because everyone talked about how stern he was. Through the recruiting process Bear and Condredge talked frequently and typically anybody Bear wanted or talked to like that, he got. Condredge said he was dead set on signing with the University of Alabama and was going to let Bear Bryant know the next time they met. Condredge Jr. said he was so excited to tell him that his hands were shaking. They talked for awhile and Condredge Jr. had one thing on his mind before he committed. Holloway Jr. asked, “Coach Bryant, you have already signed one quarterback for this class so what happens when there are two?” Condredge Jr. said Bear slowly took his hounds tooth fedora off that he is so well known for and scratched his head and looked puzzled. Bear responded, “Condredge with you being such a good athlete we thought you would excel at being receiver.” Condredge responded rather quickly out of pride, “well coach Bryant I am a quarterback and that is what I want to do in college.” Bear looked around the room and thought for a second and told Condredge, “Son, the state of Alabama was not ready to have a black quarterback.” Converage said it was pretty much over after that. He said he respected Bear Bryant for being up front and honest with me. I asked him if he thought that Bear Bryant was making that decision because he did not want to see a black quarterback? Condredge responded

by saying, “No he and I both knew that the state of Alabama was not ready. I was young and looking back on it I still would have tried.” It was later found out that Bear Bryant had twelve scholarship opportunities and all but one was accepted, all but Condredge Holloway’s scholarship (C. Holloway, personal communication, October 7, 2017).

Alabama being out of the picture Condredge Jr. looked to more opportunities. That opportunity came soon enough from a man that was well dressed and had swagger to go with it. That man was none other than Coach Bill Battle, the head football coach at The University of Tennessee. Coach Battle was young and had only been there for one year. Being a head coach at The University of Tennessee or Alabama you know one thing, most of your wins or losses don't matter unless you can beat the other rival every Third Saturday in October. Bill was looking to get a leg up on Bear Bryant, so he came down to Huntsville to introduce himself. He told Condredge Jr. that he was overly impressed with his athleticism and heart and asked him if he wanted to play at The University of Tennessee. Condredge Jr. being down this road before asked him if he was going to be able to play quarterback and Condredge said the coach responded simply, “well I don't see why not.” He knew right then and there that he was going to play for The Volunteers (C. Holloway, personal communication, October 7,2017).

Condredge Jr. recalled getting on campus in Knoxville was exciting. The students were friendly, and the players were as well. He was not the first African-American athlete to play in the SEC, so men such as Perry Wallace softened that blow. He had black teammates so when he took the field that was not a shock either in practice. The shock came when Condredge was in the quarterback group and when he was taking snaps behind center. Condredge said that sometimes coach Battle had to make sure the players stayed focused because they gazed at a black man throwing passes. When practice really took off the players all dazed again but this



time it wasn't because of the color of Condredge's skin, but for the moves, he brought to his position. Most quarterbacks across the country were traditional step back and pass white quarterbacks. Every defense was designed to stop the run unless the quarterback dropped back to pass. When Condredge stepped back to pass defenses had to come up with all new plans altogether because that man could fly (C. Holloway, personal communication, October 7, 2017).

Practice and games were two separate things though. His teammates accepted him but would the fans of Tennessee and even less likely would the opposing fans? The date was September 9<sup>th</sup>, 1972 in the deep South of Atlanta, Georgia. This was going to be the first time ever an African-American player would go under center for an SEC team. Georgia Tech also had a black quarterback so having two prolific teams going head-to-head which two African-Americans leading the charge was unheard of. Not only would it be in the deep South but it was also going to be broadcasted all over America on ABC. Condredge said he was nervous at first during the game in which he threw an interception. He recalled the play,

I threw a pass into the flat-a pass I knew better than to throw-and it was intercepted. Everyone in the stadium thought it was going to be returned for a touchdown, but I knew if I didn't catch him I was probably going to be a defensive back the next week.

(Wiedmer, February 19, 2011)

Condredge did end up catching him at the six-yard line and Tennessee's defense held them out of the end zone. Georgia Tech had to settle for a field goal and that was the one and only time the

Yellow Jackets scored. Condredge showed off his electric wheels on national television and that warm Thursday night in Atlanta, a legend was born.

Condredge received death threats prior to games from opposing fans but it never got to him. Condredge had an advantage that basketball didn't have, and that was the stands. It was harder to come out on the field due to there being a brick wall all the way around the field. Condredge recalled that Coach Battle actually told Law Enforcement to get more help just in case. With police all around the field and with his massive offensive line protecting him, he felt safe when he was on the field.

Condredge led the Tennessee Volunteers to a 10-2 record his first year as the signal caller. They played LSU in the Astrodome and ended up beating the Bayou Bengals 24-17 in the Astro-Bluebonnet Bowl. Condredge ended up with having more rushing attempts than passing attempts in his first year but that would all change in the coming years due to Coach Battle wanting to mold Holloway into an all-around quarterback.

Holloway was able to develop his arm and he threw for three times as many touchdowns in his second year at QB. He was able to lead the Vols to a second straight bowl game and a winning record. They went 8-4 that year and ended up losing to #11 Texas Tech in the Gator Bowl. The only problem was that Tennessee was still losing to Bear Bryant and The Crimson Tide. Condredge took it upon himself to try and change all that. He wanted to beat the man that told him the state of Alabama was not ready for him. His goal of beating Alabama unfortunately came up short as Alabama beat him all three years he was quarterback. Alabama ended up winning the National Championship that year. One of six for the legendary coach and 3-0 all-time against The Tennessee Volunteers and Condredge Holloway. After Condredge's last game

against Alabama, Bear came over and shook Holloway's hand and told, "I sure am glad I don't have to watch extra film every time we play you anymore." That was Bear Bryant's way of complementing Condredge and his skill. This was also on ABC and the nation watched one of the greatest coaches of all-time shake a black man's hand at midfield to pay his respects. This spoke volumes to the nation that the "Tide" of racial tension was changing (C. Holloway, personal communication, October 7, 2017).

Condredge was also the first African-American baseball player to play at Tennessee. He was one of a kind to be able to take on two sports in the SEC at the same time and hearing it from different types of fans. He was selected to be on the All-SEC and All-American teams in his final year. He had a .353 career batting average and holds the record at Tennessee for having a 27-game hitting streak. It seems the Expos knew what they were talking about when they drafted the seventeen-year-old boy at 4<sup>th</sup> overall years earlier.

After college Condredge was drafted in the 11<sup>th</sup> round of the NFL draft as a defensive back. He knew in his heart he was a quarterback so he decided to take his talents to the Canadian Football League. There he would play for twelve years in three different Canadian Cities. He went on to be the Most Valuable Player in the league in 1982. The following year won a championship for the Toronto Argonauts in 1983. He was inducted into the CFL Hall of Fame in 1999.(Canadian Football League Hall of Fame. n.d.) After his career was over he decided to settle down with his family. They moved to what Condredge called his "real home" in Knoxville where he works with student athletes to help them cope with being a new student on campus. Condredge Holloway Jr. will go down in the history books for not only being a two sport athlete but for being the right amount of flash the South needed to see on their television sets.

There was another Civil Rights pioneer that attended a university in Tennessee that didn't happen to be in Knoxville. Perry Eugene Wallace Jr. attended Vanderbilt University to get a degree and was able to do that by getting a scholarship for basketball. He just wanted to play basketball and go to school, but instead of having practice and homework to go through, he would have to endure so much more. Perry Jr. was the first African-American basketball player to play in the SEC. He went on to graduate from Vanderbilt University and was drafted by the Philadelphia 76ers in 1970. He was in the NBA for a short stint before he went back to school and in 1975 he earned his law degree at the Ivy League School Columbia University.

Perry Wallace Jr. was an intelligent, well-mannered man all through life. These gifts and traits were given to him by his parents that taught him to always go after your goals and never lose focus. Perry Wallace Sr. was born about 45 minutes Southeast of Nashville in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. He grew up on a farm where he was raised mostly by his dad due to his mother passing away when he was eleven. Alfred Wallace was the father and had to take care of Perry Jr. and all eleven of his other children mostly on his own. Alfred was stern with his children and reasonably so when you have to provide for thirteen people. Alfred had a typical farm where the kids could pitch in wherever they could, but the farm was unique from the outside looking in. Alfred Wallace was a black man in the South that owned his own farm. This was a small thing in history, but being one of the first was just the mindset the Wallace family had (Maraniss, pp. 2).

Perry Wallace Jr's. Mother Hattie Haynes grew up in the Murfreesboro area as well. Hattie was really close to her mom, but like Wallace Sr., her mother died at a young age as well. She grew loving school, and her teachers always said she was the smartest in the class. Hattie was also musically gifted as she played her mother's organ in her honor. She went on to actually write some of the music she played (Maraniss, pp. 2).

Perry Wallace Sr. asked Hattie's hand in marriage and on April 1st, 1928 they were married (Maraniss, pp. 3). They decided to pick up and move from their childhood and take on new opportunities in Nashville. Perry Sr. decided to go up a little early to try and find work to provide for Hattie and himself. Work was hard to find for a black man during these times, but Perry Sr. was a hard worker and more than determined. He took on work for a granary, the railroad, and even a chemical plant. Perry Sr. was able to make decent money at the time mainly due to Nashville being in a central location of the United States. Nashville was a very strategic location during the Civil War not only for its position but its many rivers as well. Post Civil War many businessmen used these waterways to ship their products up and down the Mississippi River. The United States really took on major industry at the turn of the 20th century, and Nashville and Perry Sr. benefited to this progress. The United States started laying steel down from coast to coast for the railroad and Nashville followed suit. Perry Sr. worked hard and felt blessed to be able to have the opportunity to work for the railroad. (P. Wallace, personal communication, September 23, 2017).

Hattie also worked to provide extra income for them by cleaning houses around the city. She took the bus all around Nashville to find work. It was said even up to the 1940s that almost 80 percent of all black women that worked in cities consisted of domestic servants and waitresses (Maraniss, pp. 3).

Hattie and Perry Sr. lived on the West side of Nashville. West side of Nashville in the present day is more where Vanderbilt University is called West End, but back then the West side was downtown Nashville. If you were to be standing on the hill at the Capitol Building, you would be able to see the Wallace house. This was the area where most blacks in the city lived. Most all black stores, shops, and even colleges were in this small area of West Nashville. The

three colleges that were in this little area brought hope to the many blacks in this area for a brighter future. There was Fisk University that was established in 1866 and named after Brigadier General Clinton Fisk. Ten short years later Nashville established the first black Medical school in the South named Meharry Medical College. The last college that was there and the one that is stronger now more than ever is Tennessee State University. TSU has produced many influential people in the world from Oprah Winfrey, Wilma Rudolph, and Ed “Too Tall” Jones (Tennessee State University Alumni Relations, n.d.).

Perry Sr. and Hattie had five children by now with four girls and a boy. On February 19th, 1948 Perry Eugene Wallace Jr. was brought into this world. Perry Jr. was a miracle baby due to Hattie being 42 years old (Maraniss, pp. 5). At this time this was very old for an expected mother. She spent two weeks in the hospital even before Perry Jr. was born and this was the first of many glimpses of showing how much of a fighter he really was. He came a little unexpected considering Ruby Jean being the youngest at the time was already ten when Perry Jr. was born. This would help both Perry Sr. and Hattie with taking care of young Perry Jr. Hattie was really close to her youngest son and taught him manners, humbleness, and never be told you can't reach your goals. All of these traits would not only come in handy with young Perry Jr's Life but become a necessity.

When Perry Wallace Jr. was old enough to go to school, Perry Sr. decided to take on a new opportunity. Nashville was rapidly expanding, and with more and more whites headed to the suburbs, there was plenty of brick homes going up all over. With houses going up on every corner, there was less care for quality and more worry about quantity for the builders. Perry Sr. had the idea of starting a business where he would go around and fix the mortar on these brick homes and polish them up as well. He was able to make more money by this spontaneous idea,

but the downfall is he was away a lot. He was able to travel all over the state to do this when the family purchased an automobile. Reading about this, all I could do was think how unreliable vehicles were back then and how dangerous it was for a black man to travel like this. I asked Perry Jr. about his dad showing courage, and he said he didn't realize it at the time, but he smiled the whole time and shaking his head saying, "my dad was something else." This was just another instance for young Perry Jr. to self consciously learn that he needs to not worry about the outside world and stay the course (P. Wallace, personal communication, September 23, 2017).

The brick cleaning business turned out to be better than Perry Sr. had hoped, and he bought a house across the city in a nicer neighborhood in their eyes. It was across the street from an all-white school, and this was a point in Perry Jrs. Life, where he thought more and more, was possible in this world. The South was very divided still, but Nashville was one of the best places in the South for African-Americans. Many whites in the city believed they could find harmony being integrated, but some there and many from outside the city did not want to see that. Following 1954 and the case Brown vs. Board of Education Nashville was going to follow suit. Nashville decided to integrate the schools, but some were worried there wouldn't be pushed back if they did it all at once, so they decided to work into it. They came up with The Nashville Plan, and it was a "stair-step" idea.( Nashville's History with School Integration, 2017) Nashville decided to start with integrating the first grade and then every year after integrating the next grade up. This was put in place so the tension would not be as bad at first. They actually did not make the decision to add on each grade until 1958 when it was appealed in court, but ultimately upheld.

Donald Gary Davidson was a professor at Vanderbilt University at this and was well known for his poetry and book reviews. He was born in Giles County, Tennessee which is fitting

that Giles County is also the location where the Ku Klux Klan was founded. (History.com Staff, 2009) He was well known for being against any type of integration. He actually wrote an article defending segregation,

“The white South denies the Negro equal participation in society, not only because it does not consider him entitled to equality, but because it is certain that social mingling would lead to biological mingling, which it is determined to prevent, both for any given contemporary generation and for its posterity” (Murphy, September 24, 2001. pp. 106-107).

He joined the Tennessee States' Rights Committee in 1950 and became the chairman of the Tennessee Federation for Constitutional Government. With his status, he was able to get the word out to others and oppose the will for the changes happening in his city.

There was also Chester W. Mason who was the chairman of the Parents School Preference committee. He appealed to the school board that was ruling on the integration law sent down from the Supreme Court. He stated he wanted the board to shift their standards from the Supreme Court ruling to the State Pupil Assignment Law. This law summed up gave loopholes in the Supreme Court ruling where whites could change schools from what they were zoned for. There were 21 “factors” that would get them out such as teaching facilities, the location of pupils, and availability of transportation. Mason also claimed that he had thousands of signatures from parents saying that they want their children going to school with their own race. Elmer Petite which was the chairman of the school board stated, “We have been on the spot for two years, and we still are. We are trying to do what we were told to do by the Supreme Court. We want to be law-abiding citizens.” (Keel, July 12th, 1957 pp. 1-2)



These men were a minority on their thoughts but were loud and willing to go down fighting for their beliefs. There are many claims of who on who contacted the Ku Klux Klan from Davidson being from Giles County all the way to Strom Thurmond who was the presidential candidate in 1948. No matter how they were called upon, the Klan was in Nashville and planned on their presence being felt. They tried to terrorize and scare any minority into segregating the all-white schools. There were accounts of violence, but nothing too out of hand due to the Klan not really having a leader or plan to all the chaos.

The day is September 9th, 1957 and it is finally the day of integration. There were eight schools that were officially the schools that would be integrated on this day. Buena Vista, Jones, and Fehr on the north side of Nashville and Bailey, Caldwell, and Glenn on the east were publicly announced in the papers. Clemons, south of downtown, and Hattie Cotton, to the northeast, was not publicly announced and they didn't have any protestors like the other six elementary schools. The eight had several things in common: All were elementary schools in working-class neighborhoods, serving white children in grades one through six (no kindergarten or preschool programs were provided in the city then). They were selected for change because African American families with first-grade children were known to live within their zones, closer to them than to the nearest black schools. (Egerton, May 4, 2009) There was some violence that morning to the first-grade black students and their families, but nothing life-threatening. There were rocks thrown and verbal threats, but thank goodness nothing over the top. Less than half of all black students that lived in these school zones went the first day of school. Also, almost half of all the white students at these schools either didn't show up or left soon after the black students were admitted in the schools.

Later on that day, most went home, but some would not let it be. There were mobs that gathered at different locations from some of the schools to the War Memorial Building. The police tried to disband most of the hoodlums, but they could not be everywhere at once. That were accounts of crosses being burned in some of the students' yards but again were broke up rather quickly by law enforcement. Midnight came, and past and many thought the trouble was over, but then an explosion happened. When 12:33 in the morning came, there was dynamite set off, and an entire wing of Hattie Cotton Elementary was erased in a matter of seconds. This was one of the two schools that were not publicly announced, so law enforcement was not present around this area. They came to the conclusion of the exact time because the explosion stopped a clock from working at 12:33. No one was present at the time it went off, and so no one was hurt. The next morning the Chief of Police Hosse addressed his officers by saying, "This has gotten beyond integration. These people who are following Kasper around have turned violent, blowing up our schools, destroying our property. The law must be enforced, regardless of who is violating it. We've got to get the job done! How many of you are ready to go out there and do it?" It was also said that every officer raised their hand and at that point, everyone was on the same page. The white extremists and anti desegregationists actually did the opposite of what they had set out to do in the first place, and that brings the whites together. With the police banding together and handing out jail time for anybody involved, many whites that were at the protests the first day were no longer there. Things died down, but of course, the hate towards another race is still present even today, and it was ever so present after these events.

The Wallace family was not shaken by the events that took place all around their neighborhood and they went on about their business like any other day. Perry Jr. had to walk to his elementary school every day. He enjoyed class but was not fond of the journey to and from.

He had to walk past some of the white schools to get to his, and some days there was trouble. The white boys would shout names at him and sometimes threw rocks, but Perry Jr. looked forward and kept walking like he was taught. There was one instance that still brings a stern look to Perry Jr.'s face. He sometimes took the bus to avoid walking through the rowdy boys and was waiting at the bus stop when a car approached him. There was a group of white young men in the vehicle when a gun was pointed out the window. The car slowed down, and the gun was pointed straight at Perry Jr. He said he stood there straight as an arrow and he didn't know if he could say it was courage or just scared to death. They slowly went by him and never stopped or batted an eye. This is just another instance of what young black men and women had to go through every day just to walk to school.

Years passed, and Perry Sr. decided to do his brother a favor and take in his nephew Clarence after he graduated high school. Perry Sr. was going to put him to work in his brick cleaning business, and this decision would change the Wallace family's lives forever. Perry Jr. being ten years old looked up to Clarence. He was a well mannered young man from the country but had a good head on his shoulders. One day Clarence asked Perry Jr. if he had ever dribbled a basketball before? Perry Jr. had never even touched a basketball before just simply said no. Clarence took it upon himself to teach little Perry Jr. the ends and outs of the game. The Wallace home being right across the street from the all-white school North High School allowed the boys to play when no one was around. Perry Jr. loved the game of basketball, but honestly, at first, he just loved being around his cousin Clarence. Days turned into nights where the boys would play. Perry Jr. worked on his skill every day he could and from that point on, fell in love with the game. He was able to watch the older black boys in high school, and Tennessee A&I (now Tennessee State) play basketball and the most amazing thing to him was people actually talked

about it. He was able to see black role models like Wilt Chamberlain and Bill Russell dominated the game. (P. Wallace, personal communication, September, 23, 2017).

Perry Jr. got to see Wilt Chamberlin play for the Philadelphia Warriors when they made a trip to Nashville to play at Tennessee A&I. When he saw the seven-foot man fly all over the gym and dunk with ease, he was hooked. He pledged that he would do that one day and worked at it every day after that. He said he always worked on jumping from squats all the way to touching door facings everywhere I went. I smiled at him and told him I used to do that as a kid too. I, unfortunately, was only 5'10 instead of Perry Wallace's six foot six frame. Perry Jr. was naturally athletic and could jump higher than most of his friends, but was never satisfied. That was just his personality never to be satisfied, but unbelievably be humble while doing it. He also used basketball as a way of just being a kid. He was always reserved and this was his way of letting go. It was also a chance to cope and be social with his peers. Up to this point, his peers in school thought he was different considering he did not talk much or act up at all. This was a way to win over friends and really be liked by many.

Perry Jr. was still in junior high when Pearl High School (his future high school) and Tennessee A&I were really taking off in sports around the world. Not only was it home to Wilma Rudolph who won multiple gold medals in the Olympics, but it was home to great basketball players too. Many colleges even outside the South did not recruit black players and if they did, it was a few at most. This all changed when a couple of coaches decided to break down those barrier walls and really utilize the talent so many teams would not even consider having on their team. UCLA's John Wooden was one of these coaches. He is arguably the best basketball coach of all time. He won 10 national championships and seven in a row. The next closest is only winning three in a row. That feat will never be broken and it was all because Wooden just saw

the talent of the man and not the color of his skin. The other coach that did this was George Ireland at Loyola of Chicago which won a national title in 1963. Both of these teams actually had players from Pearl High School. Pearl High School already had four high school national titles by the time Perry Jr. turned twelve years of age. He already could dunk by this time and of course, many people took notice including the coach from Pearl that took time to always invite him around.

Cornelius Ridley was known for to be the coach that took over for the legendary coach William J Gupton. Gupton won three consecutive National Championships for the Pearl High School men's basketball team. Gupton lead his team to winning the whole thing from 1958-1960. Cornelius Ridley took the reigns over when Gupton left. Ridley took Pearl on to win their fourth national title in six years. This was Ridley's first title and he was going to be hurting, losing some of his best players for the next year. Ridley was told about a young man that could really play the game well. When he was told it was Perry Wallace, he was hesitant because he knew him more as being a band kid. He only took Ridley two seconds to realize he was all wrong when he was able to see Perry play. Perry and his six foot five frame now were able to dunk with ease. He talked with Perry for a little bit after playing and really liked the young man. He asked Perry Jr. if he wanted to play basketball for Pearl. Perry, of course, was excited and ready to play right then and there, but the only problem was mom and dad at home. Perry told coach Ridley if he could convince his parents, then he would be able to play. Coach Ridley had a sit down with Perry Sr. and Hattie to talk about Perry Jrs. future. Perry Sr. looked at his youngest and told him he had to keep his grades up and be at church every Sunday. When Perry Jr. agreed, I would like to imagine Coach Ridley jumped even higher than his newly acquired player in celebration.

The state of Tennessee was changing in many ways and just like the schools, sports was integrating as well. Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association (TSSAA) took on an entirely integrated playoff where blacks and whites could compete for a championship in 1966. Before this in place, Coach Ridley and the Pearl Tigers had something up their sleeve. Father Ryan High School was a school before its time. The school decided to integrate in 1954 and ten years later they still hadn't played a black team. (Tamburin, August 21, 2014). Bill Derrick was the basketball coach at Father Ryan at the time and was approached by Coach Ridley. They were talking and Coach Derrick asked Ridley and his team to play in an actual basketball game. Ridley accepted without hesitation and at that point, history was set. The date was set for January 4th, 1965 and for some it couldn't get here soon enough and to others, it needed to stop right away. This was going to be the biggest basketball game the state of Tennessee has ever seen. Not only because it was breaking racial barriers, but this was two of the best teams in the whole state. Looking back it looks silly that these two powerhouses weren't playing each other every chance they got to get better, but this thought wasn't even mentioned because of the tensions.

The country and mainly the South was on pins and needles with integration changes. Threats were everywhere, bombs were being set off, and local klansmen were hiding behind their masks trying to intimidate anything and anyone who wanted to make this country equal. With everything going on in the country, the basketball game set between Father Ryan and Pearl was talked about all over the south. It was talked about so much that they did not have a gym that could accommodate. Vanderbilt University's Memorial Gym was not even able to hold the capacity. The engineer for Memorial Gym was probably not asked to perform another project after this engineering disaster. With the stands built into the floor even today, they are only able to renovate modestly. Coach Ridley and Derrick had to look elsewhere to play. Municipal

Auditorium which was constructed two years earlier in 1962, would be the perfect venue. (Reaney, June 15, 1961.) Municipal Auditorium called “Boon to City Life” was just the start of Nashville’s population boom. It was going to be the central location of all entertainment in Nashville, but who would have thought when it was constructed that it would house a white versus black basketball game. In some eyes, it was considered of as just that, white versus black, but to Ridley and Derrick, it was a chance to change history.

The game was finally here and Municipal Auditorium filled up without a seat opened. Both school bases were present along with many spectators that wanted to be there to watch history. The junior varsity game was first, which is in practice still today in the state of Tennessee. They had never played in front of even a half packed gym at their high schools, much less a crowd of this magnitude that got their early for a general admission good seat. When the junior varsity game was eventually over, the crowd rose to their feet. The Father Ryan students had heard of the high flying Pearl team but had never seen it in person. Pearl High did not disappoint with their warmups. They had everyone on their feet no matter if you were white, black, old, young, alumni, or just passing through. The black young men from Pearl were worth the price of \$1.50 admission. They could all dunk as Wilt Chamberlain did on the black and white television sets at home. The game was back and forth with Father Ryan taking a slow and steady approach while Pearl wanted to take advantage of their athletes and push the ball up the court. Both teams were trading baskets when in the last few seconds Willie Brown takes the last shot for Father Ryan. He was the only black player on the team that saw the court and he was the best. Every one of the ten thousand people knew it was going to him and he shot from the corner. The ball bounced in and out, but a little guard that had barely played at all got the rebound and put it up at the buzzer. The ball went through the net and Father Ryan had knocked off Pearl

High by the final score of 52-51. There were no fights before, during, or after the game and the police were somewhat quiet all night. Everyone was peaceful and were just there to watch a hard-fought basketball game. This was really the first glimpse the city of Nashville had of both blacks and whites conversing together and to the city officials dismay, there were no incidents. The cheers were mainly coming from one side of the court after the victory for Father Ryan, but in this game, it seemed as both teams had won (Maraniss, pp. 36-37).

Perry Wallace Jr. never really thought about Vanderbilt University growing up. When he was a boy, this was an all-white school until Joseph Johnson changed that in 1953. (*A Look Back* n.d.) Perry Jr. was only five then but it was a slow process of African-Americans being accepted to Vanderbilt. This all changed when coaches from the university started to show up at his Pearl High games. Coach Roy Gene Skinner was the head basketball coach for the Vanderbilt Commodores and had been there since 1960. When he came in he had the idea of recruiting African-Americans but did not know how to approach it since only seven years earlier they enrolled the first black student in the school. Coach Skinner worked closely with the Athletic Director Jess Neely and finally got the permission to pursue the best talent instead of being limited to the color of a man's skin. Skinner saw himself in the living room sitting in front of true negotiators in Perry Sr. and Hattie. Perry Jrs. parents were giddy about the opportunity of their son getting a degree from Vanderbilt University. Vanderbilt has had a reputation for being the Ivy League School of the South and with a degree in hand, it would open up many doors for Perry Jr. They also wanted to let Coach Skinner know that their son had many options and that he did. Perry Jr. had over a hundred scholarship offers from around the country. John Wooden himself the coach from UCLA had offered him a scholarship. Perry Jrs. parents were always able to read through people because they grew up having to be cautious. Perry Jr. recalled him being



pleasant to his parents and up front. He even called them “Mr. and Mrs. Wallace.” Now today that does not seem like that big of a deal but in 1966 this meant everything to the Wallaces. They really liked what they saw out of Coach Skinner and gave their blessing to their son (Maraniss, pp. 64-65).

Perry Jr. loved everything about Vanderbilt University when he visited. He loved the guys on the basketball team, he loved that they took their schoolwork seriously, he loved that there was a social life but you didn't have to party to have fun, but there was just one thing, Vanderbilt was in the South Eastern Conference. The SEC did not have one African-American athlete in the whole conference. Perry Wallace Jr. had no desire to become a Civil Rights pioneer. He knew he had to think long and hard about this and that he did. He knew if he was going to accept this opportunity that repercussions could be costly. Vanderbilt being in the SEC meant he had to travel to the depths of racial hate at schools like Auburn and Mississippi State. He also had many adamant people white and black wanting him to go to Vanderbilt or to take his talents elsewhere. His parents hid many letters from him that had threats or hate in them. He read them years later when his parents gave them to him. Perry Jr. said there was a lot of emotion back then but his parents were always there for support (P. Wallace, personal communication, September 23, 2017).

May 2nd, 1966 came and Perry Wallace Jr. told his parents he had decided on his future. His family waited for his next words and Perry Jr. just smiled. I have decided to go to Vanderbilt University. Early that evening came around and Perry Jr. called Coach Skinner and told him the good news. Perry said he could hear the man's smile through the phone. Skinner arranged for a signing ceremony the next day to take place in the lobby of Memorial Gym. He took on many questions from the Nashville Banner and the Tennessean. These were the two main newspapers

at the time and wanted to always get the inside scoop and leg up on the other. Many questions were asked about why he decided here and what it meant to him to be the first African-American basketball player in the SEC. Perry Jr. always downplayed the chance to be a pioneer and chose the school because the academics were like nothing else in the South and they have an outstanding basketball program. After the press conference, Perry Jr. was relieved and just wanted to focus on the upcoming school year and getting on the basketball court (Maraniss, pp. 102-104).

Seven days after he signed with Vanderbilt University he got the news that Coach Skinner had signed another player. Godfrey Dillard signed with Vanderbilt out of Detroit, Michigan. Perry Wallace could not believe his ears when he looked further into Dillard. He happened to be another black basketball player. After all this pressure he put on himself on having to be the first, it all changed when Dillard signed that dotted line. Perry was relieved to see another black basketball player on his team. Years later Dillard actually told Wallace that he signed at Vanderbilt because he decided to sign first. Dillard was actually looking for the polar opposite of Wallace in the recruiting process. He wanted to be on a great basketball team and didn't really put much stock into Vanderbilt's academics. He also wanted to become a pioneer and break down racial walls but did not want to go to a school that was going to make a mockery out of him. During the 1960s many had heard about other places in the country but Dillard really did not have a feel for the South. When Perry signed with Vanderbilt, Dillard knew right away that he wanted to join him on this historic journey (Maraniss, pp. 106-107).

In the fall of 1966, the school year was getting close to starting. Perry actually went in weeks before school officially started to get a couple of math classes under his belt. His parents wanted him to start early because they new engineering was going to be no small task at

Vanderbilt to go along with being a pioneer in the SEC. Perry said it was kind of quiet but it was nice. When he walked to church on Sundays people would tell him good luck in the upcoming season. He was relieved by these gestures and walked with pride on campus. That all changed when one Sunday morning Perry was walking through the doors of the church to find a seat in the back like he always had done when he was stopped by a couple of old men. They told Perry to come with them. When they go to the side room out of the public eye, the one man spoke up,

We're not Prejudiced. We think you will understand. Some people in the church don't like you being here. They say they'll write the church out of their wills if you keep coming. We can't have that. You can't keep coming. Do you understand?

You need to go. Now (Two old men from Maraniss, pp. 113).

Perry Wallace just simply answered, "Ok, I understand." He walked quietly out of the church and across campus back to his dorm room. He looked unfazed by this gesture but deep inside he was crushed. Perry thought Vanderbilt was going to be an opportunity for him to be just like everyone else, equal.

The summer semester passed by and Perry was ready for the school year to start. He had a bad taste in his mouth from the church incident and just hoped that was a select few that didn't accept him. September came around and Perry Sr. helped his son move in. Vanderbilt Hall was only a single room dorm, so he had his privacy. That same day Godfrey Dillard flew down and moved into his dorm. He was also in Vanderbilt Hall and Perry Jr. came to his door. They introduced themselves and started talking for hours. Many more students showed up to say hello to the black students knew where each other were. The students came and left but Perry stayed.

They talked and saw that they were opposites not just in the recruiting process but personalities as well. Perry was the listen first, speak later kind of guy and Dillard brought all the loudness and swagger that was stereotyped coming from the North (P. Wallace, personal communication, September 23, 2017).

It was hard to start school for Perry and Dillard. There were not any major incidents for the African-Americans that semester. There was some “So, they’ve let the niggers in after all.” as Walter Murray recalled from one of his professors the first day (Maraniss, pp. 131). There wasn't anything that jumps out in the newspapers but for the African-Americans attending Vanderbilt University, everyday life was taking a toll on them all. Many students have their bad days but these brave black students could not, at least out in public. They were watched by the student body just waiting for them to make mistakes. They knew they couldn't let the student body get to them to push on and not let them have that satisfaction of knowing they got to them.

Perry was introduced to his teammates on the court with all being white besides of course Dillard. Back in the 1960's colleges had Freshmen teams and that was the team Perry Wallace was going to play for. He worked on what the coach told him every night after practice to get ready for the big Varsity versus Freshman game. The Commodore fans always came out and showed support of this game, so Perry wanted to make a big impression. The Freshman held their own in the first half but when the second came around it was another story. The Freshman made a run at the end but was held off and lost the game 92-82. The fans and reporters had one thing in common that they took from this glorified practice and it was Perry Wallace Jr. was the real deal. He lead both teams in points and rebound with seventeen points and seventeen rebounds (Maraniss, pp. 124-125).

Wallace and the Commodores went up to Bowling Green, KY to their first basketball game of the year against the Hilltoppers of Western Kentucky University. The crowd was sold out and 13,000 plus spectators watched the two black players dribble the ball up and down there court. They were always underdogs to WKU but this night was different. Vanderbilt ended up winning 73-65 and setting the tone for the varsity team. The varsity boys were also an underdog but ended up winning 76-70 to a shocked Hilltopper crowd. They left on the bus after the game in excitement but the coaches were smiling conservatively for they knew this was only the beginning. They left without any incidents and the first real test on the court came as a win for young Perry Wallace Jr. (Maraniss, pp. 150-152).

Later in that year, The University of Mississippi at Oxford informed the press that they had schedule conflicts and they would be canceling both Vanderbilt games this year. Ole Miss said they doubled booked their game at Oxford and for the game in Nashville, they said they could not make it due to study requirements. Perry recalled the incident and actually spun it for the better. He said, “even though some didn't like Dillard and I, the buzz around campus was the Commodores had a good basketball team. They actually lashed out at Ole Miss for canceling the games, so I knew the culture was changing. Maybe not as fast as I had hoped but it was changing.” (P. Wallace, personal communication, September 23, 2017). Later on that year Vanderbilt played in Lexington, Kentucky against the might Adolf Rupp and the Wildcats of Kentucky. Perry had an excellent game but still was not close as the final score was 85-64. Perry sat down in the crowd getting ready to watch the varsity play and Bill Reed from the Louisville Courier-Journal approached him and asked about his outlook on being the first. Perry responded, “Honestly I don't have the pioneering spirit. I'm not mature enough to be a Martin Luther King or a James Meredith. I've got my hands full being a player-student without leading any civil

rights movement.” This was the exact response and maturity not only Vanderbilt and the SEC needed but for the South in general needed. Perry Wallace was not looking to be a pioneer and that is precisely why he was the perfect man for the job.

Perry Wallace went to many colleges over his four-year career at Vanderbilt University and things were thrown at him before, during, and after the but he stayed focus on the task at hand. He and Dillard were called every name in the book and were sent death threats every year but as Wallace recalls, “It seemed to be less and less each year.” (P. Wallace, personal communication, September 23, 2017). He had softened the blow for the young men that followed in his footsteps. He had Dillard to cheer him up and keep him focused and Dillard had Wallace to keep him down to earth and calm when intense situations seemed to get out of hand. They were like brothers that were always there for each other and Wallace does not believe that it would have been the same great outcome if he was alone in his freshman year. There were major events that took place while Perry was at Vanderbilt that changed a lot of outlooks on how they felt about race. Martin Luther King Jr. was shot in the same state, the Vietnam War was in full tilt, and the 1968 Summer Olympics in Mexico City where Tommie Smith and John Carlos simply raised their fists in the air on the podium. All the events going in the outside world were changing people’s perspectives. Brenda Beaty was an eighteen-year-old girl from Nashville that wrote a letter to the Tennessean that said,

I bet it must be a horrible feeling, to be so far away from home and see nothing but hatred and killing and hear that the same thing is happening at home and for

no reason. We're taking away their reason for being there. We can't even get along amongst ourselves.

(Beatty, n.d.)

These ways of thinking helped swing the way the public looked at segregation. The South Eastern Conference means a lot to many people in the South. It drives a passion in many and it is that passion of your team winning that helped the white South embrace Perry Wallace and the many others that followed his lead. (Maraniss, December 1, 2014)

Djery Baptiste is a Sophomore on Vanderbilt University's basketball team. He was born in Gonaives, Haiti and came to The United States for the opportunity to be more. I decided to interview this young gentleman and do a short piece to get a perspective of how playing for Vanderbilt and the SEC is now compared to when Perry Wallace accomplished this same honor. I chose Djery not only because he has become a friend of mine but also because I thought this would be my truest test of how people still treat others differently considering he is not only black but from a different country as well.

Djery pronounced almost like the name we know as "Jerry" grew up in the little country of Haiti. The country is a little smaller than the state of Maryland. There are around 10.6 million people there with approximately 95% of them being black. It is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. The country is impoverished with an alarming 40% unemployed. It is said to be worse but statistics are not regularly run in Haiti considered the last unemployment rate stat was from 2010. (*Haiti Fast Facts*, n.d.) Djery knew at a young age he was gifted with athletic ability being able to chase down the chickens for his family to cook for dinner and knew he

wanted to better himself one day. He studied hard in school to one day hope to get an opportunity to come to America.

Djery reached out to an agency to see if he would be able to go come to the U.S. and enroll in high school. Haiti's school systems are one of the worst due to the economy. The agency reached out to Djery and told him there is a private school in Texas that would love to give you a chance. He said after he got this news he told his parents and they were the happiest people. I asked him if his parents were sad he was leaving and he responded, "No, almost in no way were they sad. They were happy that their son was going to go on to be bigger and better than anything I could have done in Haiti." He also joked about how his parents were also happy he was leaving so they didn't have to feed him anymore. They said he was about to eat everything in Haiti. Djery does eat a lot being in college sports but also to help support his 6'11 245 pound frame.

When he came to America, he did not know a soul. His English was decent but still needed to work on it. The school that picked Djery up at the DFW Airport out of Dallas was Prestonwood Christian Academy out of Plano, Texas. This is an exceptional private school known for academics and athletics. Walking through the airport, it was easy to see why many high schools sought Djery out to play at their school. He had to duck under every door facing and had to turn sideways to get through them with his broad shoulders. If the process worked out, PCA was going to have a great athlete for the next four years.

The process was he said sometimes is somewhat lengthy because a family that agreed to take you in as one of their own has to okay it after a visit. Djery noted right away both parties knew that it was a match. They signed the papers and he was able to move in. I asked him about



his new family and he was pretty hesitant. He said they joke about but are serious that they “don’t want to turn into a Blind Side movie.” (Personal Communication) They are a very wealthy family and helped Djery because they wanted to instead of for the recognition. I agreed not to reveal who they were but too just describe his experiences moving to a new country and them helping him along the way. He said they helped him every chance they could. They would laugh at the mistakes he made in a playful way in which helped Djery build confidence. He said, “the less they laughed with me on my mistakes, the more I realized I was doing everything right in America.” He took this confidence with him to high school. (D. Baptiste, personal communication, October 19, 2017).

When it was time for him to go to high school, he was nervous but eager to learn. Djery knows he fell into a great opportunity and he was not going to ever let up from learning on the academic’s side and the athletic side. He was like a sponge when it came to school. He stayed late to every class and practice. His family would make a point to include him in everything, but he would often decline for he was in his books or on the court. He always overly apologized to them because he did not want to offend anyone by rejecting but his family knew he was taken advantage of his opportunity.

Watching Djery on the basketball court, you would think he was playing basketball when he could barely walk but that was not the case. Djery did not even pick up a basketball until he was eleven years old and here four years later he is playing with the best of the best out of Texas. He worked and worked until the coach saw he was good enough to play on varsity. He said he made plenty of mistakes but the coach always told him the difference between him and the rest is that he only makes that mistake once and he learns from it. He was able to adapt to the culture

around him in Texas. He loved the school there and they loved him. I believe he was fortunate with landing in a private school because some schools in Texas may not have been as kind.

Djery played basketball all four years there at PCA and they ended up winning four straight state titles. Many colleges were looking at him because of his raw talent. Coaches knew that when they took Djery in, they were going to have to coach him a lot. He had to make up for all the years he lost not playing when he was a kid. He graduated from PCA in 2013 and his major offers were from Southern Methodist University, University of Oregon, University of Southern California, University of Connecticut, and Vanderbilt University. He was very attracted to Vanderbilt University not only for the great basketball program but more for the academics. His other deciding factor was like every Texan he loved George Strait. He found out Nashville was the music city capital of the world and his eyes lit up. He decided to take Vanderbilt up on their offer and off to Nashville he went (D. Baptiste, personal communication, October 19, 2017).

He said when he arrived on campus it was different than what he was used to in Texas. Everyone was from all over the world with different backgrounds. He felt more at ease when he noticed this and was eager to start. Kevin Stallings met him in his dorm room and introduced him to the team. Stallings was the head basketball coach that recruited Djery. He said on the surface he felt right at home with the team. When the season started, Djery did not. Stallings redshirted him as most coaches would do. He wanted to give him a chance to learn the college game a little more. He practiced with the team but did not travel which helped Djery also cope with all the homework he had. I asked him about his professors and he said they go out of their way to make him feel welcome and help. We have come along way since 1966 it seems (D. Baptiste, personal communication, October 19, 2017).

Kevin Stallings, the one that recruited Djery was fired the following year. Vanderbilt was not performing like some would have liked, so they pursued other coaches. Djery had to start all over with gaining trust from a new coach. This coach was fifteen years younger and had a lot more experience on the court, getting picked 16th overall in the NBA draft and playing for seven seasons. Bryce Drew was this new head basketball coach and he had an excellent reputation. His father Homer is one of the greatest coaches in basketball at Valparaiso. His older brother coach Valpo after their father retired before going on to coach at Baylor University. Bryce knew he had talent on this Vanderbilt team and he was ready to see it. They did a two-day long scrimmage amongst the players to really showcase themselves to the coach that seemed as if he should still be in college by his looks. Bryce decided to make some cuts but liked what he saw out of Djery, so he was able to stay.

“Coach is really tough on me at times and wants me to lead by example,” Djery told me. I asked him why that was and he shrugged it off without an answer. I have watched some of their practices and he is harder on Djery. A friend of Djery and me who is actually from Haiti as well talks with me at the practices. We talk about Bryce’s toughness towards Djery and believe it is not a skin color problem at all. We believe it is because he is from Haiti and the coach knows Djery has everything in the world to lose. The other guys on the team do not get the same treatment. There is a breaking point for everyone and some may just quit because they can go to another school or back to their families but not Djery. Bryce knows he works his tail off on the court and in the classroom because he does not want to go back to Haiti until he gets his degree. There is still racial tension out there but in this case and I am sure many cases in other Universities the coach or person is taking advantage of the player because the player is too afraid to fight back due to fear of loss and disappointment. Djery added that he really has never seen or

heard anybody show racial aggression towards him ever since he has been in the United States. The saying is that you have to take that with a grain of salt though because Djery's social life is very limited due to his studies. It was a great thing to hear coming from him though (D. Baptiste, personal communication, October 19, 2017).

Djery has learned to cope with any challenges by just embracing them. He works very hard for himself, his family in Texas, his family in Haiti, and for all the fans out there of Vanderbilt University. He is majoring in Public Policy and Linguistics. He says once he graduates he wants to be an ambassador for his country of Haiti. I told him that is of course after you go to the NBA and laughingly he said: "of course." The last thing I found out after deciding to add Djery to this piece is to honor the past Vanderbilt Commodore Alumni they wore jerseys with certain players on the back. Djery was chosen to wear the pioneer of SEC basketball for all black men himself, Perry Wallace. I asked him what that meant to him and he paused for a second and looked up to the rafters where Wallace's jersey is one of two hanging and he responded, "I am truly grateful for Perry Wallace and all he did not only for me but for the game of basketball in the South. It was an honor to wear his name on my back." I was floored by his response and emotion because right then and there I knew that even a guy from Haiti that has only been here for seven years knew what Perry Wallace Jr. meant to not only the game of basketball but what he did for the South through sports.

These three different accounts are all different but have all three gone through adversity in life. I wanted to get the perspective of each person as not only from the sports side of things but as a person and their adversities. Taking what I have learned from these three extraordinary gentlemen, my views are a little different at what is going on in the world today from politics to everyday life.

I grew up in Waverly, Tennessee where we are known for Loretta Lynn and where the National Championship of Motocross is held every year. It is a quiet town with a population of 4,105. The town would be a lot smaller if it weren't for the location. It is located in the middle of the state from North and South and it is bordering the Tennessee River. The River has kept most of this town afloat. I say most because it was flooded partially by the Tennessee Valley Authority. Franklin D Roosevelt decided on the "New Plan" and created dams along the Tennessee valleys to not only help the state of Tennessee but let it thrive after the hard hits from the Great Depression. This town has been through a lot, but the one thing that I am very proud of is it has been open to anybody and everybody. Waverly being home to DuPont (Chemours acquired this DuPont plant in July of 2015) since 1959 has been very diverse. When they shut down a plant all across the United States, they allow people to relocate and many move to the town of Waverly. This being said, there is still almost 90 percent population rate of Caucasians. (*Populations Demographics for Waverly, 2016*)

I grew up with some of my best friends being black and never saw them as unequal and I can say any of my other teammates saw the same thing towards them. When you have that kind of bond and trust with one another other people's thoughts, do not really seem to matter. Looking back on it now, there were some unfortunate events on the timeline. I was a team captain most of my high school career in all three sports of baseball, football, and basketball. I took this honor seriously and teammates knew that. We would have captain meetings with the coaches, but in some, there would be the black guys too. We would have to go over the gameplan, but also against some teams we would have to go over keeping our cool. The black players on our team were in those meetings because we had to talk about how they would be treated by other teams. We play a lot of schools in very rural areas in West Tennessee that are known to be all white. We

all would be told to play the game right and do not let it get to you. The funny thing was it did not seem to get to Alex Green(one of the top running backs in the state) or Ricco Ralston(a four-star basketball recruit coming out of high school) when we were playing. They would be called every name in the book shooting free throws in Stewart County's gym or take a couple of extra jabs under the pile on Camden High's field, but the only people that it seemed to get to were their friends that always came to their aid. Writing this paper I wanted to ask Alex and Ricco why and how they were able to keep their cool and both of them reply in their own way, but both were about the same. Alex replied, "because I knew that they would never really be able to do anything that bad to me. I knew that because my teammates like you and many others would always have my back and most of the time they would regret ever saying anything." As captain, I knew I had to take it upon myself to talk to some of the guys that could put an end to the foolishness or at least make them think twice before they said anything again. We never played dirty, but those games were so emotional on our part that sometimes it felt that way. There was something about beating your opponent so bad after their racial hate came out. Waverly boys would play their hardest when other teams thought it was necessary to tell some of our black teammates how they felt. All that changed around my Junior to Senior year in high school. I actually recall at one point during the Stewart County football game the coach yelling at his middle linebacker to stop saying things because that fires us up even more to play. It pretty much ended by my Senior year and we stopped having those closed meetings. Looking back on it though, it just shows that whatever is going on in your little community, it is not the same in many others.

Social Media has always been criticized by many and with good reason sometimes. Whether it be kids having their heads in their phones at the dinner table or scrolling Twitter

while driving there are a lot of cons out there. That being said, there is a lot of good that comes from Social Media as well. It is shedding light on more and more instances that were just brushed to the side in the past. Before Social Media, you could only get information from the news channels and newspapers, but now everyone has a platform to be heard. People have more resources to document events from cameras on our phones to the ability to store messages in pretty much every format you can think of. More and more stories are getting out about how people are treated in other parts of the country and the world. You can definitely tell people are noticing and taking actions. Whether events in the past few years are dividing or bringing this nation together, one thing is for sure, and that is we are still not where we need to be as a country.

The South Eastern Conference in 2012 was looking to expand from twelve teams to fourteen. Texas A&M had always been considered University of Texas at Austin's "little sister" and they wanted to put an end to it. The SEC wanted Texas A&M bad for they were a great academic institution, they were a proven contender in many sports, but the main reason is to get a presence in the state of Texas. The year before this expansion talk, Texas partnered up with ESPN and they created the Longhorn Network. Texas would have a major television network, broadcast almost every Longhorn game from every sport imaginable. This brought a major uproar amongst other schools in the Big 12, Texas's conference, which was the spark needed for schools to talk realignment. Texas A&M saw their chance and on September 25, 2011 announced that they were headed to the SEC (Alabama.com n.d.).

Texas A&M joining was a huge win for the SEC but they went into the decision understanding that there would be an even number of teams. The conference now had thirteen schools and wanted to add another. They reached out to many schools in which most were very

interested. Institutions like West Virginia, Virginia Tech, and Oklahoma were among some of the bigger ones but they all fell through. That is when the SEC decided to welcome The University of Missouri at Columbia to the conference. SEC fans were skeptical of allowing a University like Missouri into the conference. This would become the northern most school in the conference and that bothered some people. The South is very proud of the heritage with some good instances and some bad instances but allowing a northern state in had some on pins and needles. Fans were able to hide behind the fact of saying that Mizzou doesn't belong in the SEC because they were not as good as many of the schools in the conference currently. That all changed in less than a year's time when Mizzou went to back to back SEC Championships. This quieted a lot of the critiques when they could not resort to saying they were not up to par with sports. It seemed as if many Southern reporters and fans ran out of ways to say, "we don't like them because they are not like us from the South."

The University of Missouri was making the SEC proud all until September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2015 came. The student government president Payton Head who was an African-American posted on social media that he had heard and saw demonstrated bigotry and anti-gay sentiments. He described a group of unidentified people in a passing truck yelled out racial slurs at him. He said on Facebook, "For those of you who wonder why I'm always talking about the importance of inclusion and respect, it's because I've experienced moments like this multiple times at THIS university, making me not feel included here." (Columbianmissourian.com, September 14, 2017). Many academic advisors including Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin said the incident was unacceptable.

"Racism Lives Here", was the first protest on campus that happened eight days after Head posted on Facebook. This protest was put together due to students claiming that nothing



had been done about the incident Head had claimed. A week later a second protest was formed with the same message to head officials that racism would not be tolerated. These protests started to wake not only the campus up about the problem but with social media, the outside world was listening in as well.

Three days later after the second protest occurred, there was an incident with the African-American student group, the Legion of Black Collegians. The student group was preparing for homecoming festivities when a drunken student walked across the stage stumbling around. He was asked to leave by some of the group and when walking away the LBC claimed that he screamed aggressively towards them, "These niggers are getting aggressive with me." This was followed by a statement from the Chancellor, "Racism and all prejudice is heinous, insidious and damaging to Mizzou...that is why all of us must commit to changing the culture at this university." (Basi, C. October 6, 2015).

The tension was rising in Columbia, Missouri and the outside world was tuning in. All of the events up to this point were just a small glimpse of the hate growing. On November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015 a student decided a strike would get peoples' attention. Jonathan Butler put together a hunger strike and vowed that he would not eat until the president of the university resigned. Butler stated that this all came about because president Tim Wolfe had struck him with his car during a protest that was against Wolfe himself. This sparked even more of an outcry even after police did not file any charges due to students linking arms and walking towards Wolfe's car and Butler initiating contact which was minimal.

The main event that was on every news channel in America came on November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2015. Many black football players for the university took a stand and said they would not practice nor

play until president Tim Wolfe turned in his resignation. If you want to get America's attention, protesting football is a pretty good start. There were cameras everywhere wanting to catch a glimpse of Student Athletes walking around campus when they were supposed to be practicing. Making matters worse, the university was going to be fined one million dollars for not playing the game that Saturday against Brigham Young University. This was only going to be the second time ever the two teams met. The SEC Commissioner released a statement saying, "I respect Missouri's student-athletes for engaging on issues of importance and am hopeful the concerns at the center of this matter will be resolved in a positive manner." (Wallace, A. November 8, 2015). That same day Wolfe told many sources that he was not going to resign and that he was fully committed to bettering the university.

One day after the SEC Commissioner said he backed the players and that Wolfe said he would not resign, he did just that. Wolfe resigned and Chancellor Loftin resigned later in the day. Students and staff were puzzled by the announcements by Loftin but faculty on the board stated he was not fit for making highly difficult decisions. He was given a lesser role at the university instead. This campus was in a whirlwind and nobody really knew what to do.

In the weeks following there were many instances of unresolved problems. Students were still camping in the school's quad and then staff members caught on video yelling at students to leave the quad. Student body president Head made another social media post this time stating the KKK had been sighted on campus which was later found to be completely false for which he apologized. There was even many of our country's top officials or candidates that were weighing in on what they thought about the racial tensions in Columbia, Missouri.

This all transpired in a matter of two months. Racism can uproot any foundation. The University of Missouri was founded in 1839 but that could not even stop the unraveling of racism. The university's enrolment, revenue, and good named have plummeted. According to New York Times there was a nose dive in donations. The athletic department saw a 72% decline from the year before and the freshmen enrollment was down 35%. The broke it out and enrollment among blacks was down 42% to whites being at 21%. There have been seven dormitories temporarily closed and over four hundred faculty and staff members let go. The University of Missouri may find away to stop the decline but it will never be the same. Families from the state do not want their kids going to a school where it is acceptable to lash out at another person just for being a different color or different belief. There are many instances of problems like these that transpired at Mizzou that go unnoticed. There are many rules in place now a long with classes provided by all universities in the SEC to help prevent these problems in the future.

The Presidential Election has sparked a lot of hate in our country since Donald Trump has taken office. We are in a weird time in this world where one side hates Trump because they think he is racist (and I know that is just scratching the surface) and the other side love Trump because they believe he is a racist. The sides are not the majority of the population because hopefully and I am not sure of this, but hopefully they voted for him or against him because of his policies and not what some wish to believe on one side of the fence or the other. Nevertheless this is how the county sees it. Small things keep "triggering" this country to divide us in a tough time. We have to deal with racial tensions still in the twenty-first century when it should have been laid to rest decades ago. We have terror attacks and everything in between that we have law enforcement in place to take care of, but instead we are wasting taxpayer money have to get extra

police for racial rallies. I was disgusted to hear that the White Lives Matters rally was coming to Tennessee and more particular to Murfreesboro, the same town where Perry Wallace Jrs. parents grew up. The group picked Murfreesboro is because Tennessee is typically a Republican state and the small group believes Trump is a reason to stir up trouble. They decided to start the rally in Shelbyville which is about 20 minutes South of Murfreesboro. They picked this location because obviously, it is close to Murfreesboro, but also because this location is very diverse in race. When that morning came, many counter-protestors were there and actually did a peaceful protest. One actually used many loud speakers and played the song “La Bamba” which detoured the protest. The White Lives Matters group had such a tough time even hearing themselves talk that they shut it down and did not even go to Murfreesboro. It was a small victory, but with small victories, there comes a moderate amount of confidence build up. I was proud of my state for standing up and letting them know this is a “No Hate State.”

The hate outrage epidemic has not just stemmed from the Presidential Election, but also from police brutality. Many believe that police officers from around the United States are taking minority lives just because they can. The studies show that from this date in 2016 to 2017, there have been 15 more fatalities from police taking the lives of the public. In 2016 there were 963 people shot and killed by law enforcement and this year that number is projected to be even higher. (*The Washington Post*, 2017) Almost every shooting is justified, but with Social Media today, nothing really slips through the cracks anymore. Retaliation has unfortunately set in, and many officers have been shot and killed from surprise attacks due to these police shootings. Law Enforcement is stepping up to the plate though, and supplying everyone on active duty to wear a body camera. This hopes to detour officers from having sinister ideas but also as evidence to

why they had to use deadly force. Studies have shown that these cameras really do not detour law enforcement in behaving differently. (Ripley, October 20, 2017)

Police brutality has sparked the imagination of the National Football League and many other professional leagues. The NFL has been under scrutiny from the public for allowing their players to kneel during our country's National Anthem. The players are saying there is injustice in our country and they want more people aware of what is going on around them. Just like me in high school, I was blind to the outside world and how others might think towards the situation. Roger Goodell has made it clear that it is the players of the NFL rights to stand or kneel for the National Anthem. There is nothing in their contracts that limit them to express their beliefs, and many are taking advantage of the opportunity. Many Americans have been outraged by these protests and have called that the rule is changed or scrambling to find a rule that will force them to "pay respects." The only thing in the rulebook that would be close to these guidelines is Rule 5 Section 4 Article 8 that reads,

"PERSONAL MESSAGES. Throughout the period on game-day that a player is visible to the stadium and television audience (including in pregame warm-ups, in the bench area, and during postgame interviews in the locker room or on the field), players are prohibited from wearing, displaying, or otherwise conveying personal messages either in writing or illustration, unless such message has been approved in advance by the League office. Items to celebrate anniversaries or memorable events, or to honor or commemorate individuals, such as helmet decals, and arm bands and jersey patches on players' uniforms, are prohibited unless approved in advance by the League office. All such items approved by the League office, if any, must relate to team or League events or personages. The League will not grant permission for any club or player to wear, display, or otherwise convey messages, through helmet decals, arm bands, jersey

patches, or other items affixed to game uniforms or equipment, which relate to political activities or causes, other non-football events, causes or campaigns, or charitable causes or campaigns. Further, any such approved items must be modest in size, tasteful, non-commercial, and non-controversial; must not be worn for more than one football season; and if approved for use by a specific team, must not be worn by players on other teams in the League.”(NFL Rulebook, 2017)

This does address the fact that the players cannot say or wear any messages regarding politics or anything along those lines but it does not say anything about players having to stand at attention for the National Anthem. It does state that you have to be visible to the crowd during the Anthem, and some have not done that. Rishard Mathews for the Tennessee Titans is one in particular that has stayed in the locker room until the game starts. He started coming out to be barely visible from the tunnel so he would not get fined by the NFL.

The NFL is also going through turmoil on the Ezekiel Elliot trials. He was accused of aggravated assault of an old girlfriend. He was acquitted of all charges but the NFL stepped in and decided they wanted to do something about it as well. In the past few years, the National Football League has been under harsh scrutiny over sexual and aggravated assault cases. Ray Rice was charged on March 27th, 2014 on third-degree aggravated assault charges. The NFL then on July 24th, 2014 suspended Rice for two games. The public outcry was heard loud and clear to Roger Goodell and the NFL for a harsher penalty. He knew he could not give him a different sentence after he already made it final, so the problem sat there and festered. Finally, a break for the NFL came on September 8th, 2014 when the FBI released a video to the NFL of new footage of the crime. (Elliott, September 11, 2014) Roger Goodell suspended Ray Rice indefinitely after this new evidence and then hours later Rice was released by the Baltimore Ravens. (Rosenthal, September 8, 2014)

The Ray Rice incident was gone but not forgotten when Joe Mixon now on the Cincinnati Bengals was allowed to be drafted into the NFL. Nixon was accused of aggravated assault his senior year at the University of Oklahoma at Norman. The actual incident occurred three years earlier when Mixon was a Freshman there. There was no guidelines or restrictions sent down from the front office of the NFL before entering the draft and again they heard plenty of disapproval.

The Elliott case is a different one though. He was accused of domestic assault but was never charged by the court system. (Hardy, November 9, 2017) The charges were dropped on September 6th, 2016 by the Columbus Police Department, where Elliott played his college ball and many thought that was the end of it. The NFL decided to bring Elliott in to meet with their investigators a month later. Nothing was done at this time and again many thought it was over. Seven months later in June, Elliott met with independent advisors paid by the NFL. They looked into the accounts and all evidence and reached back with Roger Goodell. August 11th, 2017 the NFL suspended Ezekiel Elliott for six games due to his domestic assault allegations. Elliott appealed right away and was granted it. It went back and forth three separate times with the suspension going on and off until November 9th, 2017. Almost three months later Elliott hit a brick wall when a three-judge panel denied his motion to be reinstated. He will now serve at least a four-game suspension before his next hearing.

Why would the NFL and Roger Goodell go on and on with this suspension even though he was not charged? The NFL is tired of getting black eyes from their players not being able to stay out of trouble of course, but I believe it is deeper than that. I believe the NFL is trying to make this a huge deal to the media and anyone else that will listen to create a diversion of the protests. The protests of kneeling for the National Anthem has hurt the NFL in a big way.

Ratings have been tanking due to many boycotting the National Football League. Ratings are plummeting at a fairly high rate of attendance in football stadiums to television viewership.

According to Nielsen Data, Fox and CBS are taking 7% and 14% hits of viewership for Sunday afternoon games. That is a big swing and many say it is from the boycott. This has taken a major hit on commercial deals for the NFL and advertisements. Papa Johns, the official pizza company of the NFL, has publicly come out with a statement against the NFL that was in a phone interview with ESPN,

“The NFL has hurt us” and “We are disappointed the NFL and its leadership did not resolve this.” (Rovell, November 1, 2017) John Schnatter, the CEO of Papa Johns, believe their sales are down in a direct effect from the NFL ratings.

The numbers and statistics are all around us and it shows what racial tension can do even to an organization as strong as the National Football League. The United States is known for their style of football and how fun the sport really is but it seems to be coming down by the problems we have that has been dividing us since the beginning of time. The National Basketball Association, on the other hand, has a rule in place for their players not to kneel during the National Anthem. Under Basic Principles, Section H, Article 2 it states, “(2) Players, coaches and trainers are to stand and line up in a dignified posture along the sidelines or on the foul line during the playing of the National Anthem.” (*NBA Rules Committee*, October 13, 2016) This rule was actually put into place decades ago, so players were not shooting during the National Anthem. The NBA having this rule in place has actually helped them tremendously without taking a huge dip in ratings. The NFL knows if they put that rule into place now, it would not go over well at all. The NFL is balancing on a fine line that the NBA does not have to go through and Roger Goodell does not know what to do. I honestly believe the Ezekiel Elliott trials have



something to do with a diversion to give the public something else to talk about besides the protests.

The other significant racial tension going on with the National Football League is Colin Kaepernick. Colin was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1987 to mother, Heidi Russo. She was nineteen years of age at the time and Colin's father left them before he was born. Not knowing what to do, Heidi put Colin up for adoption. Rick and Teresa Kaepernick decided to adopt him after losing two of their sons to heart complications. He would have a brother and sister in the all-white family and go on to be really happy. They moved to California before Colin was in grade school and his football career took off from there. He made all A's at John H. Pitman High School while being named to the all-state team in baseball, football, and basketball his senior year. He was not heavily recruited in football due to his terrible mechanics on throwing the football. He was very athletic but lacked the weight you needed to become a good football player. He had a 6'5 frame but only weighed 168 pounds. Despite being drafted by the Chicago Cubs in baseball, he decided to take his football talents to the University of Nevada in Reno. This was the only scholarship Colin got in D-1 and he pledged he would make it count. He started his Freshman year at quarterback and by his Sophomore year, he was named Western Athletic Conference Player of the Year. His Senior year he again won WAC Conference Player of the Year and went on to graduate from the University of Nevada at Reno.

Kaepernick was drafted on April 29th, 2011 as the 36th pick overall to the San Francisco 49ers. His first year with the 49ers was hit or miss. He was a rookie, so he had to buy his time to learn the playbook. Alex Smith who was drafted 1st overall in 2005 was the starter and the 49ers were rolling. Smith led them to the NFC Championship game in which they lost. When 2012 came along Kaepernick was put into the game on running situations as the "wildcat"

quarterback. The wildcat was established to get a running quarterback in shotgun to let him run around and occasionally pass. Kaepernick was ideal for this with his speed and his expertise in the “pistol” formation they ran at his Alma Mater. He was able to get some playing time but when you have Alex Smith in front of you, there is not much you can do. This all changed when Smith got hurt and had to come out of the game. Kaepernick did well in his first game at QB but nothing too special. The next game on primetime television on Monday Night Football he dazzled fans all around the world. He threw for two touchdowns but really gave the 49ers offense the spark that they had been missing. When Alex Smith was cleared to play following the MNF game against the Bears, then Head Coach Jim Harbaugh made the decision publicly to stay with the hot hand of Kaepernick. This brought some controversy but when you had the talent Colin did and showing it, it was hard to take him out. Kaepernick went on to lead the 49ers to the Super Bowl but fell short to the Baltimore Ravens. The following season in 2013 his talents still showed but he was not as effective in years earlier. The 49ers still went on to the NFC Championship game yet again but came up short to Kaepernick's three costly turnovers to the Seattle Seahawks.

Kaepernick was on top of the world in every way but winning a Super Bowl up to this point. On June 4th, 2014 he signed a contract with the 49ers that was six years and worth 21 million a year. Looking back on his timeline, this seemed to be the start of his some call his “downward spiral.” Kaepernick was fined \$11,025 for using inappropriate language to an opposing player. (Gutierrez, September 17,2014) Whatever he said must have been really intense to be fined for it considering players are caught using profanity all the time with all the microphones lined up around the field. He then was fined a month later for wearing “Beats by Dre” headphones in the press conference after the game. Bose was the official headphones of the

NFL, so they fined him \$10,000 there. (*The Associated Press*, October 9, 2014) After going to the NFC Championship game in each of the last three seasons, Colin Kaepernick and the 49ers were only able to muster an 8-8 season and miss the playoffs.

Kaepernick started the 2015 season about the same as he left off. Week nine rolled around and then head coach Jim Tomsula made the call to bench Kaepernick. Colin had a 2-6 record up to that point and did not seem to care. The bye week came and past and by week 11 the 49ers decided to put Kaepernick on the Injured Reserve and have season-ending surgery on his nonthrowing shoulder. (Fucillo, November 24, 2015) Prior to the 2016 year, Kaepernick announced that he wanted to be traded publicly. (Ingrassia, February 25, 2016) The 49ers did not trade him and he was still battling it out for the starting job. He won the job but was benched again after poor performances. San Francisco and Colin decided to restructure his contract with giving him the players option in the last year. He played out the rest of the year as the starter and then decided to opt out of his contract and test the free agency. Kaepernick's contract was structured in a way that if he underperformed, the contract would in a way do the same. He only received about 31% of his \$126 million contract. (Gaines, September 10, 2017)

The 49ers restructured his contract in 2016 not only for bad performance but also due to the extra attention he was bringing when someone discovered him kneeling during the National Anthem. Following the week 3 Pre-Season game reporters asked him about why he was not standing for the National Anthem. Kaepernick responded saying via NFL.com

I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people and people of color. To me, this is bigger than football and it would

be selfish on my part to look the other way. There are bodies in the street and people getting paid leave and getting away with murder.

(Wyche, August 27, 2016)

After this stance, it was seen around the NFL that more and more players were kneeling. I remember that season watching the games and actually seeing what players were sitting and standing. With so many rallying behind Kaepernick from the players to the celebrities, it was talked about everywhere you turned. That season despite not even starting at the first of the season Kaepernick had the highest selling jersey in the NFL. He then talked about what it meant to him being number one and what he was going to do with the proceeds on his Twitter account,

I want to thank everyone who has shown me love and support, it truly means a lot! I wasn't expecting my jersey sales to jump to number one because of this, but it shows the people's belief that we can achieve justice and equality for ALL! The only way I can repay you for the support is to return the favor by donating all the proceeds I receive from my jersey sales back into the communities! I believe in the people, and WE can be the change!(Daniels, 2016)

Colin Kaepernick was the talk of every tabloid and newspaper in the country. The unfortunate thing that came from all this was a poll that E-Poll Marketing Research did. They polled 1,100 whose demographics represented the general population, and they found that 37 percent of Caucasians disliked Kaepernick "a lot". That same study that was done two years prior in 2014 only had 7 percent of Caucasians having that same dislike. The other side of the spectrum, 42 percent of African-Americans voted they liked Kaepernick "a lot" compared to the

poll in 2014 of just 2 percent saying they liked him “a lot”. (Rovell, September 22, 2016) This act that Kaepernick has done whether it be for better or worse has taken a toll on this country.

There is still hate when it comes to race and unfortunately there probably always will be but there are many people and groups out there trying to make it a very small minority.

Government has been involved with taking down statues Confederate generals’ statues. I do hope these statues find good homes in museums because it is a part of our history but they do not need to be on a court square. Those statues in many opinions is not a symbol of racism and hate but when small minorities groups on either side take it the wrong way, it can get ugly and so why risk something that does not really have a purpose? Government asks the same question and states one by one are taking down monuments. This is just one instance of how our state and national governments are taking the necessary steps to weed out racism.

The good news out of all this is there is hope. Yes, there is a lot of negativity in America and probably always will be but some how we always bounce back. I believe with all the disasters that have recently taken place from the two hurricanes in Houston and Florida to the terrorist attacks in Las Vegas and Sutherland Springs, Texas the country as a whole has come together. These unfortunate incidents that have taken place have shown us how precious life really is. Why fight amongst our neighbors when we can build each other up? These acts of kindness from everyone from men, women, children, black, white, or Latino it shows that everyone can come together for a greater good when tragedy strikes. We just have to ask ourselves though, why does the worst have to hit before we wake up and not know what we were fighting amongst each other for in the first place?

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