

Chris Paul, LeBron James, Dwayne Wade, Carmelo Anthony ESPYS, 2016

*This speech was the opening of the ESPY awards ceremony on July 13, 2016. When Mr. Anthony references "The events of the past week" he is talking about extensive protests that broke out after the police shootings of two black men, Alton Sterling and Philando Castile.*

**ANTHONY:** Good evening. Tonight is a celebration of sports, celebrating our accomplishments and our victories. But, in this moment of celebration, we asked to start the show tonight this way — the four of us talking to our fellow athletes with the country watching. Because we cannot ignore the realities of the current state of America. The events of the past week have put a spotlight on the injustice, distrust and anger that plague so many of us.

The system is broken. The problems are not new. The violence is not new. And the racial divide definitely is not new. But the urgency to create change is at an all-time high.

**PAUL:** We stand here tonight, accepting our role in uniting communities, to be the change we need to see. We stand before you as fathers, sons, husbands, brothers, uncles — and in my case, as an African-American man and the nephew of a police officer, who is one of the hundreds of thousands of great officers serving this country.

But, Trayvon Martin. Michael Brown. Tamir Rice. Eric Garner. Laquan McDonald. Alton Sterling. Philando Castile. This is also our reality.

Generations ago, legends like Jesse Owens, Jackie Robinson, Muhammad Ali, John Carlos and Tommie Smith, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Jim Brown, Billie Jean King, Arthur Ashe and countless others, they set a model for what athletes should stand for. So we choose to follow in their footsteps.

**WADE:** The racial profiling has to stop. The shoot-to-kill mentality has to stop. Not seeing the value of black and brown bodies has to stop. But also, the retaliation has to stop. The endless gun violence in places like Chicago, Dallas, not to mention Orlando, it has to stop. Enough. Enough is enough. Now, as athletes, it's on us to challenge each other to do even more than we already do in our own communities. And the conversation, it cannot stop as our schedules get busy again. It won't always be convenient. It won't. It won't always be comfortable, but it is necessary.

**JAMES:** We all feel helpless and frustrated by the violence. We do. But that's not acceptable. It's time to look in the mirror and ask ourselves what are we doing to create change. It's not about being a role model. It's not about our responsibility to the tradition of activism.

I know tonight we're honoring Muhammad Ali. The GOAT. But to do his legacy any justice, let's use this moment as a call to action for all professional athletes to educate ourselves. It's for these issues. Speak up. Use our influence. And renounce all violence.

And most importantly, go back to our communities, invest our time, our resources, help rebuild them, help strengthen them, help change them.

We all have to do better. Thank you.

Donovan Livingston gave this speech at his graduation ceremony from Harvard Graduate School of Education in May of 2016.

My name is Donovan Livingston and I came to address you in the best way I know how, but you have to forgive me I have to take this moment in for a little while. When I spoke at my high school graduation several years ago, my high school English teacher threatened to replace me on the program or cut my microphone when she found out I was interested in doing a poem as apart of my remarks. Um, so I am eternally grateful for being able to share this piece of myself in my most authentic voice with you this afternoon.

So – spoken word poetry – it insists on participation. So if you feel so compelled: snap, clap, throw up your hands, rejoice, celebrate. Class of 2016 this is your address and this is your day.

LIFT OFF

“Education then, beyond all other devices of human origin,  
Is a great equalizer of the conditions of men.” – Horace Mann, 1848.  
At the time of his remarks I couldn’t read — couldn’t write.  
Any attempt to do so, punishable by death.  
For generations we have known of knowledge’s infinite power.  
Yet somehow, we’ve never questioned the keeper of the keys —  
The guardians of information.

Unfortunately, I’ve seen more dividing and conquering  
In this order of operations — a heinous miscalculation of reality.  
For some, the only difference between a classroom and a plantation is time.  
How many times must we be made to feel like quotas —  
Like tokens in coined phrases? —  
“Diversity. Inclusion”  
There are days I feel like one, like only —  
A lonely blossom in a briar patch of broken promises.  
But I’ve always been a thorn in the side of injustice.

Disruptive. Talkative. A distraction.  
With a passion that transcends the confines of my consciousness —  
Beyond your curriculum, beyond your standards.  
I stand here, a manifestation of love and pain,  
With veins pumping revolution.

I am the strange fruit that grew too ripe for the poplar tree.  
I am a DREAM Act, Dream Deferred incarnate.  
I am a movement – an amalgam of memories America would care to forget  
My past, alone won't allow me to sit still.  
So my body, like the mind  
Cannot be contained.

As educators, rather than raising your voices  
Over the rustling of our chains,  
Take them off. Un-cuff us.  
Unencumbered by the lumbering weight  
Of poverty and privilege,  
Policy and ignorance.

I was in the 7th grade, when Ms. Parker told me,  
“Donovan, we can put your excess energy to good use!”  
And she introduced me to the sound of my own voice.  
She gave me a stage. A platform.  
She told me that our stories are ladders  
That make it easier for us to touch the stars.  
So climb and grab them.  
Keep climbing. Grab them.  
Spill your emotions in the big dipper and pour out your soul.  
Light up the world with your luminous allure.

To educate requires Galileo-like patience.  
Today, when I look my students in the eyes, all I see are constellations.  
If you take the time to connect the dots,  
You can plot the true shape of their genius —  
Shining in their darkest hour.

I look each of my students in the eyes,  
And see the same light that aligned Orion's Belt  
And the pyramids of Giza.  
I see the same twinkle  
That guided Harriet to freedom.  
I see them. Beneath their masks and mischief,  
Exists an authentic frustration;  
An enslavement to your standardized assessments.

At the core, none of us were meant to be common.  
We were born to be comets,  
Darting across space and time —  
Leaving our mark as we crash into everything.  
A crater is a reminder that something amazing happened here —

An indelible impact that shook up the world.  
Are we not astronomers — looking for the next shooting star?  
I teach in hopes of turning content, into rocket ships —  
Tribulations into telescopes,  
So a child can see their potential from right where they stand.  
An injustice is telling them they are stars  
Without acknowledging night that surrounds them.  
Injustice is telling them education is the key  
While you continue to change the locks.

Education is no equalizer —  
Rather, it is the sleep that precedes the American Dream.  
So wake up — wake up! Lift your voices  
Until you've patched every hole in a child's broken sky.  
Wake up every child so they know of their celestial potential.  
I've been a Black hole in the classroom for far too long;  
Absorbing everything, without allowing my light escape.  
But those days are done. I belong among the stars.  
And so do you. And so do they.  
Together, we can inspire galaxies of greatness  
For generations to come.  
No, sky is not the limit. It is only the beginning.  
Lift off.

Michelle Alexander is a civil rights lawyer and legal scholar who is also the author of *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. This speech was given to the Unitarian Universalist Association.

I feel there is an awakening beginning in communities all across the country today. So many of us, even of those of us who claim to care, and who have been committed for a long, long time to social justice have, in my view, been sleep walking for the last couple of decades.

In my state, in Ohio, you can't even get a license to be a barber if you've been convicted of a felony. Just today, the New York Times reported that more than half of the African Americans in New York City are jobless. More than half. Nowhere in the article did it discuss the role of the criminal justice system, and branding people and locking them out of legal employment for the rest of their lives.

For the rest of their lives, once branded, you may find it difficult, or even impossible to get housing, or even to get food. What are folks expected to do? You're released from prison, can't get a job, barred even from public housing, may not qualify for food stamps in some states. What are you expected to do?

Well, apparently you're expected to pay hundreds of thousands of dollars in fees, fines, court costs, accumulated back child support. In a growing number of states, you're actually expected to pay back the cost of your imprisonment. And all of this could be a condition of your probation or parole.

And then, get this. If you're one of the lucky few who actually manages to get a job upon release from prison, up to 100% of your wages could be garnished. Up to 100% to pay back all those fees, fines, court costs, accumulated back child support. What are folks supposed to do? What is this system seen designed to do? Seems designed, in my view, to send folks right back to prison, which is what, in fact, happens the vast majority of times. About 70% of people released from prison return within three years, and the majority of those who return in some states do so in a matter of months because the challenges associated with mere survival are so immense.

So what do we do? What do we do as people of faith, people of conscience in response to the emergence again, of this vast new system of racial and social control? A penal system unprecedented in world history?

Well, in my view, nothing short of a major social movement has any hope of ending mass incarceration in America. And if you doubt that's the case, if you think something less, than do consider this. If we were to return to the rates of incarceration that we had in the 1970s, before the war on drugs and the get-tough movement kicked off, we would have to release four out of five people who are in prison today. Four out of five. More than a million people employed by the criminal justice system would lose their jobs...

And I know there are some people who say there's no hope for ending mass incarceration in America. Just as many were resigned to Jim Crow in the south...

But I know that Dr. King, and Ella Baker, and Sojourner Truth, and so many other freedom fighters, who risked their lives to end the old caste systems, would not be so easily deterred. ...

So in honor of Dr. King, and all those who labored to bring and end to the old Jim Crow, I hope we will build together a human rights movement to end mass incarceration. A movement for education, not incarceration. A movement for jobs, not jails. A movement to end all forms of discrimination against people released from prison. Discrimination that denies them basic human rights to work, to shelter, and to food...

But before this movement can truly get underway, a great awakening is required. We've got to awaken from this colorblind slumber we've been in to the realities of race in America.

And we've got to be willing to embrace those labeled criminals. Whether they're labeled 'criminals' because they came into the country without the proper documentation, or whether they were labeled criminals because they were caught with something in their pocket. We have got to be willing to embrace those labeled 'criminal.' Not necessarily their behavior, but them, their humanness. For it has been the refusal and failure to recognize the dignity and humanity of all people that has been the sturdy foundation of every caste system that has ever existed in the United States, or anywhere else in the world.

Michael Eric Dyson, "Brief but Spectacular, Why White Americans Don't See Themselves When They Here the Word 'Race'" PBS NewsHour

Michael Eric Dyson is a professor of sociology at Georgetown University and the author of *Tears We Cannot Stop: A Sermon to White America*

One of the greatest privileges of being white in this country is to encounter a police person on the street and live to tell about it.

When many people say, let's get rid of political correctness, that's a shorthand for, let me keep on being bigoted the way I was before.

As the great philosopher Shawn Carter said, you was who you was before you got here, player, and you might change, but that's just the top layer.

When you think about the collective white fragility of many white Americans, you know, black people, brown people, red, yellow people, you know what we do? I'm going to break a secret to you. We're very cautious and careful about how you might interpret things, because you're very fragile. Your feelings might get hurt.

You have had 44 of 45 presidents. Most CEOs of American Fortune 500 companies have been white. Where are the tears of white America coming from?

To be white is to be seen as, I'm just a human being. I'm just an American. Why can't you guys do the same?

So, many white brothers and sisters don't understand they possess a race. When you hear gender, what do we think? Oh, that must be the women. We don't think, hey, I possess a masculinity. And, often, it's a toxic masculinity.

Many white brothers and sisters, when they hear the issue of race, they think the other. They never think themselves.

It was the great, late Gore Vidal who said, we live in the United States of amnesia.

So, America is obsessed with history when, what? It's a reenactment of the Civil War, some battle that was lost in the South.

But when it's about black history, why don't you people get over that? Stop obsessing about slavery. Stop talking about reparations. Stop speaking about historical repression. Talk about what's going on now.

When it makes America look great, claps, applause. When it doesn't, get out of my face. Stop living in the past.

My role is, for many communities, a paid pest. That's what I do. I'm a professor. So, I get paid to think about stuff that is pestiferous.

I try to use humor. I try to use self-deprecation, but the ultimate goal is the same. Can we challenge the forces of unconscious white privilege and implicit bias to come out of the closet and to be held accountable? That's my job.

One of my white students, after reading a book that horrendously detailed the tragedies and horrors of white violence against black people, said, "For the first time in my life, I feel ashamed to be white."

I didn't want him to get stuck in a pocket of misery and guilt, because white guilt ultimately will not fix anything.

You're going to get into circles that I will never get into. You're going to go home to Thanksgiving. Go home and talk to granny, not before you eat the turkey or the stuffing or the pumpkin pie. But after, then say to her, you know what, I have got black and brown and red and yellow friends, and it's not what you say. Or say to your cousin and your uncle, this is not how it goes down.

And when we do that, we can get rid of the amnesia that has blocked a white grappling with its own problems and issues, and tell the truth about race in America.

My name is Michael Eric Dyson. And this is my Brief But Spectacular challenge to white America.



**Kimberle' Crenshaw, TEDTalk, TED Women 2016, "The Urgency of Intersectionality"**

I'd like to try something new. Those of you who are able, please stand up. OK, so I'm going to name some names. When you hear a name that you don't recognize, you can't tell me anything about them, I'd like you to take a seat and stay seated. The last person standing, we're going to see what they know. OK?

All right. Eric Garner. Mike Brown. Tamir Rice. Freddie Gray.

So those of you who are still standing, I'd like you to turn around and take a look. I'd say half to most of the people are still standing. So let's continue.

Michelle Cusseaux. Tanisha Anderson. Aura Rosser. Meagan Hockaday.

So if we look around again, there are about four people still standing, and actually I'm not going to put you on the spot. I just say that to encourage transparency, so you can be seated.

So those of you who recognized the first group of names know that these were African-Americans who have been killed by the police over the last two and a half years. What you may not know is that the other list is also African-Americans who have been killed within the last two years. Only one thing distinguishes the names that you know from the names that you don't know: gender.

So let me first let you know that there's nothing at all distinct about this audience that explains the pattern of recognition that we've just seen. I've done this exercise dozens of times around the country. I've done it to women's rights organizations. I've done it with civil rights groups. I've done it with professors. I've done it with students. I've done it with psychologists. I've done it with sociologists. I've done it even with progressive members of Congress. And everywhere, the awareness of the level of police violence that black women experience is exceedingly low.

Now, it is surprising, isn't it, that this would be the case. I mean, there are two issues involved here. There's police violence against African-Americans, and there's violence against women, two issues that have been talked about a lot lately. But when we think about who is implicated by these problems, when we think about who is victimized by these problems, the names of these black women never come to mind.

Now, communications experts tell us that when facts do not fit with the available frames, people have a difficult time incorporating new facts into their way of thinking about a problem. These women's names have slipped through our consciousness because there are no frames for us to see them, no frames for us to remember them, no frames for us to hold them. As a consequence, reporters don't

lead with them, policymakers don't think about them, and politicians aren't encouraged or demanded that they speak to them.

Now, you might ask, why does a frame matter? I mean, after all, an issue that affects black people and an issue that affects women, wouldn't that necessarily include black people who are women and women who are black people? Well, the simple answer is that this is a trickle-down approach to social justice, and many times it just doesn't work. Without frames that allow us to see how social problems impact all the members of a targeted group, many will fall through the cracks of our movements, left to suffer in virtual isolation. But it doesn't have to be this way.

Many years ago, I began to use the term "intersectionality" to deal with the fact that many of our social justice problems like racism and sexism are often overlapping, creating multiple levels of social injustice...

Many years ago, I began to use the term "intersectionality" to deal with the fact that many of our social justice problems like racism and sexism are often overlapping, creating multiple levels of social injustice.

I would go on to learn that African-American women, like other women of color, like other socially marginalized people all over the world, were facing all kinds of dilemmas and challenges as a consequence of intersectionality, intersections of race and gender, of heterosexism, transphobia, xenophobia, ableism, all of these social dynamics come together and create challenges that are sometimes quite unique. But in the same way that intersectionality raised our awareness to the way that black women live their lives, it also exposes the tragic circumstances under which African-American women die.

Police violence against black women is very real. The level of violence that black women face is such that it's not surprising that some of them do not survive their encounters with police. Black girls as young as seven, great grandmothers as old as 95 have been killed by the police. They've been killed in their living rooms, in their bedrooms. They've been killed in their cars. They've been killed on the street. They've been killed in front of their parents and they've been killed in front of their children. They have been shot to death. They have been stomped to death. They have been suffocated to death. They have been manhandled to death. They have been tasered to death. They've been killed when they've called for help. They've been killed when they were alone, and they've been killed when they were with others. They've been killed shopping while black, driving while black, having a mental disability while black, having a domestic disturbance while black. They've even been killed being homeless while black. They've been killed talking on the cell phone, laughing with friends, sitting in a car reported as stolen and making a U-turn in front of the White House with an infant strapped in the backseat of the car. Why don't we know these stories? Why is it that their lost lives don't generate the same amount of media

attention and communal outcry as the lost lives of their fallen brothers? It's time for a change.

So what can we do? In 2014, the African-American Policy Forum began to demand that we "say her name" at rallies, at protests, at conferences, at meetings, anywhere and everywhere that state violence against black bodies is being discussed. But saying her name is not enough. We have to be willing to do more. We have to be willing to bear witness, to bear witness to the often painful realities that we would just rather not confront, the everyday violence and humiliation that many black women have had to face, black women across color, age, gender expression, sexuality and ability...

So I said at the beginning, if we can't see a problem, we can't fix a problem. Together, we've come together to bear witness to these women's lost lives. But the time now is to move from mourning and grief to action and transformation. This is something that we can do. It's up to us.