

Why Bill Clinton Should Keep Kwame Ture's Name Out of His Mouth

OPINION

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(Source: [Black Culture News](#))

Although the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and 1970s feels like it occurred eons ago, many people still remember the marches, protests, and violence as if it happened just

yesterday. No matter how much time goes by, we must continue to honor those who fought for us to have equal opportunities and channel their spirit as we fight to make changes today.

Recently, we lost a civil rights icon over the last few weeks—John Lewis. Lewis spent all of his youth *literally* putting his body on the line in order to practice peaceful, nonviolent protest. Despite almost being killed and receiving a brain fracture on the Edmund Pettus Bridge, Lewis fought with hope in his heart for the future, until his very last breath. While many people during this time period had the same goals and wanted to see the same results, they went about achieving it in different ways. Some people believed in peaceful protest and boycotts, while others preached separation and self defense.



(Source: [Kreol Magazine](#))

One of those people advocating for self-defense as well as Black unity was Trinidadian activist and organizer Kwame Ture, formerly known as Stokely Carmichael. Although Ture and Lewis are remembered in very different ways, they had similar beginnings. Both had been leaders in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and had also been Freedom Riders who risked their lives while traveling into the deep south. Eventually, they went their separate paths; Lewis going on to be seen as a more patient, peaceful figure, while Ture was more of a

radical revolutionary, even being the person to coin the term, “Black Power.”

On July 30th, John Lewis’ funeral was held and attended by a number of people as well as guest speakers, including former President of the United States, Bill Clinton. While guests like former President Barack Obama and Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi gave their speeches and reflected on Lewis’ legacy and the achievements he accomplished, Clinton did otherwise. While he did praise and commend Lewis for doing such honorable work during his lifetime, Clinton made a point to not only disrespect Kwame Ture, but what he stood for as well.



“There were two or three years there where the movement went a little bit too far towards Stokely. But in the end, John Lewis prevailed,” he spoke to funeral goers. Though he didn’t say it explicitly, that indeed translates to, “Stokely Carmichael was one of those threatening Blacks, John Lewis wasn’t.”

While nobody is perfect or exempt from flaw, Bill Clinton should be the *last* person to speak on

Black leaders and Black issues. He has absolutely no moral ground to stand on, as his presidency had an extremely negative impact on Black civilians in the United States. Kwame Ture spent his entire life fighting for the struggle of Black people everywhere, even being targeted by the FBI which eventually resulted in him going into exile until his death in 1987. Seven years later in 1994, Bill Clinton would go on to pass not one, but *two* harmful pieces of legislation that would lead to mass incarceration, specifically in the Black community.



(Source: [The Crime Report](#))

On March 7th, 1994 the Clinton administration passed what is known as the “Three-Strikes Law,” which made it nearly impossible for offenders with two or more serious crimes to serve anything less than a lifetime sentence in prison.

Six months later on September 13th, 1994, Bill Clinton signed what is known as the “Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act,” infamously called the “1994 Crime Bill.” This bill resulted in the over policing of Black and Brown neighborhoods and more prisons being built

around the country. It also led to the elimination of higher education for prison inmates who wanted to get degrees while incarcerated by prohibiting inmates from receiving Federal Pell Grants from the government.

By being tougher on crime, Bill Clinton disproportionately gave Black and Brown citizens harsher and longer sentences compared to their white counterparts, even if they committed the same crimes.

Though many members of Congress have repeatedly stated that the 1994 Crime Bill was a mistake, it has yet to be repealed, and still hurts many communities of color today.



(Source: [NPR](#))

Kwame Ture's legacy will forever be known for his work to unite Black people and empower them, while Bill Clinton is known for locking them up and throwing away the key. Think of it as Black liberation vs. Black mass incarceration. *Plain and simple.* The next time Bill Clinton thinks about criticizing a prominent Black figure who died fighting for positive change, he should think about how his presidency has harmed Black families all across the country and reconsider opening his mouth.

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