

WHAT'S TOLERANCE ANYWAY?

Written by Jeffrey L. Boney, Associate Editor
Wednesday, 01 May 2013 00:00



The issue surrounding homosexuality in America is a hot-button issue that has riveted this nation in the recent years. As of late, the issue of same-sex marriage has dominated the headlines and has been a major topic of discussion the media to the Supreme Court.

When President Obama came out in support of marriage equality for gay and lesbian people last year, many people in the nation and within the Black community shared their sentiments on the issue. While many people applauded the President's decision to support the issue, many people were disappointed and in disagreement with the President.

Whatever side you fall on concerning this issue, the question I have is who defines what is acceptable and unacceptable in American society and culture?

Some people can be so downright disrespectful and demeaning when someone differs with their belief or opinion, that they lack "**tolerance**" and become downright abusive and viciously attacking those that are on the opposite end of the spectrum.

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, "**tolerance**" is defined as "*sympathy or indulgence for beliefs or practices differing from or conflicting with one's own.*"

As I see it, it appears that whenever a person has a differing position on an issue like homosexuality, politics or religion, many people who have a strong belief or opinion and tend to respond emotionally. In my opinion, "**tolerance**" means respecting another person's beliefs or opinions, without being forced to accept them as my own. I mean, I can respect a person's point

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of view, but I shouldn't be forced to have to agree with it.

As I look at this recent Jason Collins situation, where the 12-year NBA center acknowledged he was gay in an interview with Sports Illustrated magazine, I have seen many responses concerning the issue. Many people have expressed their support for him and have called him courageous for coming out publicly. Others have expressed opposition to his lifestyle.

Yesterday, ESPN NBA analyst Chris Broussard was castigated when responding to a question about whether the NBA was ready to deal with openly gay players in the league, while he was on a panel with openly gay ESPN senior writer LZ Granderson on ESPN's "Outside the Lines" show.

Granderson had stated that the issue demanded more conversation in order to progress, to which Broussard agreed and said: *"I'd like to second what LZ said. I'm a Christian. I don't agree with homosexuality. I think it's a sin, as I think all sex outside of marriage between a man and a woman is....If you're openly living in unrepentant sin, whatever it may be ... that's walking in open rebellion to God and to Jesus Christ."*

After taking a beat down on social media and over the Internet, Broussard released a statement late Monday night that said, *"Today on OTL, as part of a larger, wide-ranging discussion on today's news, I offered my personal opinion as it relates to Christianity, a point of view that I have expressed publicly before. I realize that some people disagree with my opinion and I accept and respect that. As has been the case in the past, my beliefs have not and will not impact my ability to report on the NBA. I believe Jason Collins displayed bravery with his announcement today and I have no objection to him or anyone else playing in the NBA."*

Now for many, it's easy to castigate a brother like Chris Broussard if you only are fed select soundbytes, but if you look at the entirety of the interview and what he was responding to, you can see that he made several comments that didn't display bigotry. Broussard was actually responding to the comments in the upcoming May 6th Sports Illustrated article, where Collins says, *"I'm from a close-knit family. My parents instilled Christian values in me. They taught Sunday school, and I enjoyed lending a hand. I take the teachings of Jesus seriously, particularly the ones that touch on tolerance and understanding."*

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During the “Outside the Lines” show, Broussard also said that he and Granderson, despite their conflicting views of homosexuality, have socialized together in public situations without animosity. He said, *“I don’t criticize him, he doesn’t criticize me and call me a bigot, call me ignorant, call me intolerant.”* Broussard concluded by saying that other conservative Christians in the NBA want similar tolerance for their views as well. So, that is the question, do people who differ in faith, values, beliefs, opinions, political preference or religion receive equitable tolerance?

Most people are so passionate about what they believe that they can or will never deviate from that. You are never going to get 100% of people to unanimously support any particular issue, so people should be realistic about that.

When I look back at how A.C. Green was treated when he played in the NBA and chose to live an abstinent lifestyle; were he and those who supported him given the same tolerance? What about Tim Tebow and his decision to come out as an openly professed Christian; were he and his supporters given equitable tolerance?

I know what the dictionary says about tolerance, but the question really is, are true “tolerance” and acceptance of others’ beliefs, faiths and opinions really being administered fairly to everyone or only for those who dictate what is acceptable or unacceptable in today’s society and culture? I really do hope I can get an answer.

Jeffrey L. Boney serves as Associate Editor and is an award-winning journalist for the Houston Forward Times newspaper. Jeffrey is a Next Generation Project Fellow, dynamic, international speaker, experienced entrepreneur, business development strategist and Founder/CEO of the Texas Business Alliance. If you would like to request Jeffrey as a speaker, you can reach him at jboney1@texasbusinessalliance.org.