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## "Do Not Engage Y'all!" Training and Preparing Our Black Students for Battle

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# “Do Not Engage, Y’all!”:

## Training and Preparing Our Black Students For Battle



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Furthermore, how do we handle the students who seek to make a change but do not have the training or know-how to effectively start the task?

forces surrounding them. White men were facing them, ready for war, and armed to attack. In 2015, however, I would never have guessed that I would see my peers facing this exact same scenario on a college campus. Now, I understand that there is a certain method to handling issues of racism and race relations within a university system, but when these issues are continually being ignored by administrators who are in positions as powerful as former Mizzou President Tim Wolfe, there is a problem.

But what happens to the student who does not understand this very issue? What happens when Black students become so outraged with a situation that they can no longer control their actions or words? Furthermore, how do we handle the students who seek to make a change but do not have the training or know-how to effectively start the task? We, as the informed minority members of predominately white institutions, are doing our peers a disservice by not engaging with them to create effective “change mechanisms” that make a difference on our campuses in the same manner that Jonathan Butler and the students at Mizzou have done.

Just as the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was founded in 1960 on the campus of what is now known as Shaw University, we must form a coalition in the same manner that serves to aid students in proper training and education surrounding demonstrations, protests, and change-seeking events. This cannot be light-hearted by any means, and we cannot afford to do this for the sake of the name. Similar to SNCC, we must work collectively to inform and educate ourselves on the policies, protocols, and practices of our institutions so that we can assist those who are not as informed. Unlike SNCC, we cannot afford to actively seek

demonstrations and sit-ins, as the university climate we live in today is not well equipped to handle such unrest and will likely end in yet another case of police brutality. We must move forward with this notion in an effort to protect our own from stagnant, ill-written policies, humiliation on college campuses, and emotional releases of anger at inopportune times.

Although I am not advocating that we all meet at nighttime in private basements to prepare for a war against racism and injustice on university campuses, I am advocating for a governing body. This governing body needs to be a part of the institution, a part that seeks to serve as a place

for training and educating students on how to properly release emotion, effectively make a point, and collectively demand for change. We have gone too long without the proper guidance that they had in the 1960s, and I can no longer watch as students of color yell, scream, and fight against those who deem them unworthy to voice their opinions. Instead, I want to televise the revolution and be the one screaming, “DO NOT ENGAGE, Y’ALL! DO NOT ENGAGE!”



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As a Black male student on the campus of a predominately white university, I come with baggage. Yes, we -- as human beings subject to emotions and years of built up issues -- all come with baggage. My baggage is different, however, and it is time everyone acknowledges that. Unlike the invisible knapsack carried by my white counterparts, my baggage is ceaselessly evident. My baggage looks like over 400 years of oppression and matches the pain of 1,000 slaves. I have been torn, battered, removed, shifted, and locked away by teachers, leaders, strangers, and friends all before arriving to this campus -- a campus where I am expected to behave according to your white, middle-class standards. I am forcing you to deal with it with the same tenacity that I have been forced to suppress it. So when I see people who look like me being tossed around and treated poorly at institutions very similar to mine, I cannot help but look around for the injustices and threats to humanity here. Tears have been shed, letters have been written, and discussions have been had, but I still cannot seem to find a way to release the enormous amount of emotion shut within me, begging for an outlet.

As I sat and watched the unfolding of a movement at the University of Missouri (Mizzou), my blood began to boil. Initially it boiled in anger against the men and women who dared stand in front of my peers and lock their arms in counterprotest against us. I could see the hurt and the fear in the white woman’s eyes. They called her Anna, and I wanted for the life of me to be there so I could scream to her, “Anna! Have some humanity and stand up to them. Be our ally and tell them no.” I could see she wanted so badly to do so. There was, however, hope for me in this video. At the half way point, the student behind the video camera, while capturing every moment of the incident, consistently yelled to my peers, “Do not engage, y’all! DO NOT ENGAGE!”

When I look back at events that shaped the 1960s, I recall pictures and videos of Black people linked and locked together as if they were trees planted by the water, solemn and silent as they had been trained to do in order to achieve the most impactful goal: change. They would demonstrate, chant, and protest, but they would never engage with the oppressive