

urbanworld

Oh, Say Can You See

"This is precisely the time when artists go to work. There is no time for despair, no place for self-pity, no need for silence, no room for fear. We speak, we write, we do language. That is how civilizations heal."

Toni Morrison

Mr. Floyd's murder was captured with a camera from a cellphone and broadcast around the world in seconds. It's not that this type of act is new. It was the unedited horror of Mr. Floyd's 8 minutes and 46 seconds of polite pleading as we watched his light go out. "Officer please, I can't breathe." That caused the rest of the world to sit up and say, "This really happens to Black people in America?" Yes, it does. It switched from hanging trees to choke holds and knees.

Now perhaps it's easier to understand why Kaepernick, so urgently, was taking a knee under "Oh, say can you see." With global protests and unrest within days of Mr. Floyd's murder, this demonstrated the power of seeing and believing.

To see protesters and police kneeling in solidarity speaks to a bold new world of possibilities. An opportunity to make things right...to effectuate change.

Government can make laws and police can enforce them, but ultimately, they work for and represent us. If we do not understand each other, we'll still call the police on Black men in parks while they birdwatch.

Art has the power to heal. Filmmaking in particular has the amazing ability to help us to see and understand the lives of others.

Photographer and filmmaker Gordon Parks wrote, "I picked up a camera because it was my choice of weapon against what I hated most about the universe: racism, intolerance, poverty."

Filmmaking has become one of the most important tools in the modern-day civil and human rights movement. These films have had the power to reopen cases and shine a light on injustices of the past and defend those here in the present.

For nearly 25 years, we at Urbanworld have been advancing the inclusion and impact of storytellers by providing an important platform for their work and their voices. To our storytelling community, the world needs you to create now, more than ever. Tell our stories. The world is open to understanding. It wants to change and can do so with your help.

Over the last week I have received many calls from supportive people asking, “What can I do to help make a difference?” Educate yourself on the two Americas, existing side by side, and consider the role you play in making them one. Watch films and learn...discuss them, sit with them. Where possible, help to fund and create these movies so that these stories can be seen. Here is my own personal recommended list of amazing films (in no particular order) that should be required viewing for anyone who has a desire to better understand the world around them and to become an informed citizen who can make a difference.

1. The Hate You Give
2. When They See Us
3. Harriet
4. Just Mercy
5. Get Out
6. BlackKkKlansman
7. Loving
8. If Beale Street Could Talk
9. 1 Angry Black Man
10. Queen and Slim

In Love and Service,



Stacy Spikes
Urbanworld

