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**Sketches of Our Culture: Apathetic, Going on Pathetic  
Student Writers' Corner**

**By Tolu Olorunda**

**BlackCommentator.com Student Guest Commentator**

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"Be your brother/sister's keeper"

"Love thy neighbor as thy self"

"Do unto others as you would love to be done unto"

"You see/hear something, you better say something, 'cause saving something ain't worth saying nothing"

(Just a few of those virtues naturally expected of bonafide human beings. Unfortunately, with the emergence of commercial rap, "NO SNITCHING" has taken precedence over those set standards of humanity.)

The black community has always had the weighty challenge of dealing with a minority within its populace which functioned in a way that was antithetical to its unity and progress. The only difference between then and now is that now, the vast majority of blacks have become regrettably numb and immune to the pain of their own fellow-brothers and sisters. Having endured the brutal dilemma of American enslavement, coupled with the history of neglect by 911 operators and police officers, it is

understandable for a generation to be consciously tone deaf, but such an excuse is only valid for a limited amount of time. Apathy within the black community is like cancer in the system of a new born baby – before long, reality will set in. We have allowed the incessant travails of black life to silence our moral responsibility for taking of each other. Malcolm X would be displeased, Du Bois would weep, and Dr. King would lament this misfortune. The history of indifference within the black community is one which must be visited in order to decipher the severity of the dialogue which must be conducted within our circles.

One of the earliest recollections of “coldness” within our community is the tragedy of [Kitty Genovese](#). She was a New York City Woman who was stabbed numerous times and sexually-assaulted over the time span of half an hour. An additional blow was dealt when the public realized that her screams of “Oh my God, he stabbed me! Help me!” were largely ignored by the immediate neighbors and passers-by. Sadly, this incident would not close the curtain on apathy from within the Black and Brown communities.

On August 24, 2007, [CBS News reported](#) the rape and pillage of a 26-year-old woman without any intervention from the well-aware neighbors. The local prosecutors spoke of a security video which showed how “at least 10 witnesses ignored a woman’s cries for help for more than an hour as a man beat and sexually assaulted her.” The Police spokesman elaborated on it saying, “The surveillance video clearly showed men and women looking out their apartment doors or starting to walk down the hallway before retreating as the woman was assaulted for nearly 90 minutes... The video shows one person looking out of her door probably three times. It shows another person walking up, observing what’s going on, then turning and putting up the hood of his sweatshirt.”

Sadly, again, the ball doesn’t stop rolling. A Milwaukee newspaper, [JSOnline](#), published a story – on September 11 2006 - of the brutal assault and rape of an 11-year-old girl. The story spoke of the young lady being assaulted by up to 19 males – with a 16-year-old female friend who gleefully watched, encouraged the men and did nothing to stop the assault.

Unfortunately, a couple more examples await our dissection. Within the last year, the controversy of “[Dunbar Village](#)” has garnered some wind, leaving us no option, but to deal with the horrendous happening in a public fashion. On July 14th, 2007, the Associated Press reported a disturbing incident in which a 35-year-old Haitian mother and her 10-year-old son, were subjected to the satanic antics of teenagers - who we’re most likely gang members. The report states how the mother and son, who lived in the thin-walled projects of West Pam Beach, were “huddled together, battered and beaten, in the bathroom - sobbing, wondering why no one came to help.” A graphic and heart breaking description of the episode was rendered: “For three hours, the two say, the 35-year-old Haitian immigrant was raped and sodomized by up to 10 masked teenagers as her 12-year-old son was beaten in another room. Then, mother and son were reunited to endure the unspeakable: At gunpoint, the woman was forced to perform oral sex on the boy... Afterward, they were doused with household cleansers, perhaps in a haphazard attempt to scrub the crime scene. The solutions burned the boy’s eyes. The thugs then fled with a couple hundred dollars’ worth of cash, jewelry and cell phones.” Deeply saddening, was the response of a certain resident, Paticia Matlock, who was quick to point out the conventionality of the affair – in that area code. She said, “So a lady was raped; big deal, there’s too much other crime happening here...”

More recently is the story out of Philadelphia of a 20-year old woman having to comprehend the unremorseful insouciance of a [neighbor](#) who told reporters of hearing cries and screams but did absolutely nothing. On June 25, 2008, [6abc.com](#) reported an

incident in which a young woman was raped overnight and robbed by three men, much to the awareness of at least one neighbor. Next door "neighbor" of the victim, Benite Sangare recalled the occurrence: "She got in the hallway, slammed her door shut and screamed. I didn't pay any attention to it. I thought she fell over something, and that was it. I went to bed... I heard her scream 'Oh my goodness, oh my goodness, oh my God.' Then I didn't pay attention and laid back down."


How one can express satisfaction over an unmitigated act of lassitude, is beyond the human mind's ability to comprehend. The victim eventually took a mile-long walk to the closest police station to report the incident.


Assault of Black females accounts for 18.8-28% of reported sexual assault cases. Given the understanding that African American females make up only 7% of the U.S. population, and the reality that most of the rape charges are filed against black males, the future is at best bleak, if we don't act now to "right our wrongs." We are dying a slow-death, and the burden is upon us to remember the covenant we took under God, to protect the sanctity and innocence of our people. It is a "Now or Never" moment for the black community. What we do within the next one year - vis-à-vis repairing the fractured tentacles and structures of our brotherhood/sisterhood - will determine how far we go, in matters of progress and true "promised-landing." In the words of the eloquent and prophetic leader, "We've got some difficult days ahead..."

**BlackCommentator.com** Guest Student Commentator, Tolu Olorunda, is an 18-year-old local activist/writer and a Nigerian immigrant. Click [here](#) to reach Tolu Olorunda.

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