

Is All Lives Matter a Hateful Message?

Last week, student leaders at the University of Houston [drafted a bill](#) giving the student body president emergency powers to punish one of its members, Vice President Rohini Sethi.

Following the slaying of five police officers in Dallas, Sethi posted these two phrases on social media: “Forget #BlackLivesMatter; more like #AllLivesMatter”



Her fellow student activists moved quickly, demanding Sethi resign for her “[insensitive, disgusting, thoughtless, and blatantly disrespectful](#)” comment.

The punishment came down Saturday. It includes a 50-day suspension and diversity training. Sethi [announced](#) she’d abide by the sanctions.

Three days before Sethi’s punishment was meted out, the Undefeated, an ESPN project that explores the intersections of race, sports and culture, ran [an interview](#) with Seattle Seahawks cornerback Richard Sherman.

In the article, the outspoken athlete, who is black, shared a message: [As Human Beings, All Lives Matter.](#)”

The NFL is unlikely to suspend the superstar for his comment. But Sherman is not getting off scot-free; he is getting hammered hard on what the Undefeated calls [Black Twitter](#).

What is the lesson being sent to people? *Don’t talk about race.*

It’s been nearly 20 years since a Seinfeld episode explored

the fear many Americans have about the topic. In the episode, when the race of Elaine's boyfriend comes up, George, the most neurotic of the group, expresses what most Americans feel when the subject of race comes up: "Is it okay to talk about this? I don't think we should be talking about this!" (The episode, which used humor effectively to explore the fear many Americans have when discussing race, is now considered racist, [by some](#).)

Seven years ago, Attorney General Eric Holder blasted the U.S. as a "nation of cowards" for its failure to discuss race. Then and now I felt Holder had a point. But how is dialogue on race possible when a message as benign as All Lives Matter is deemed venomous and hateful?

I've heard people say that those who use the rejoinder All Lives Matter "just don't get it." *Of course all lives matter. We're highlighting the fact that black lives don't seem to truly matter in our society.*

Fair enough. But equally true is that people such as Sherman and Sethi are not suggesting that black lives don't matter. (Black lives are implicit in the word "all.") What Sherman and

Sethi are doing is challenging the raison d'être of Black Lives Matter, the premise that America's culture is racist and doesn't protect brown-skinned people.

Such a conversation is worth having, but shutting down those who disagree with your premise has never helped persuade anyone you are right. When you silence someone you don't prove them wrong, as [the adage](#) goes, you're merely telling the world you fear what they might say.

If we're looking to have a constructive dialogue on race, are we not sending people the wrong message?

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Jon Miltimore is the Senior Editor of Intellectual Takeout. [Follow him](#) on Facebook.

[IMAGE CREDIT: [Youtube](#) | Black Lives Matter vs All Lives Matter]