

**JAMES BALDWIN AND
WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY, JR.,
CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY DEBATE - 1965 -**

JAMES BALDWIN: *Leaving aside all the physical facts which one can quote, leaving aside rape or murder, leaving aside the bloody catalogue of oppression, which we are in one way too familiar with already, what this does to the subjugated—is to destroy his sense of reality.*

This means in the case of the American Negro, born in that glittering republic . . . and in the moment you are born, since you don't know any better, every stick and stone and every face is white, and since you have not yet seen a mirror, you suppose that you are, too. It comes as a great shock around the age of five, or six, or seven to discover that Gary Cooper killing off the Indians when you were rooting for Gary Cooper, that the Indians were you.

It comes as a great shock to discover the country which is your birthplace and to which you owe your life and your identity has not in its whole system of reality evolved any place for you.

MALCOLM X: *We need an organization that no one downtown loves. We need one that is ready and willing to take action, any kind of action by any means necessary.*

JAMES BALDWIN: *When Malcolm talks, or the other Muslim ministers talk, they articulate for all the Negro people who hear them, who listen to them, they articulate their suffering. The suffering which has been in this country so long denied. That is Malcolm's great authority over any of his audiences. He corroborates their reality. He tells them that they really exist, you know.*

There are days—this is one of them—when you wonder what your role is in this country and what your future is in it. How precisely are you going to reconcile yourself to your situation here and how you are going to communicate to the vast, heedless, unthinking, cruel white majority that you are here. I'm terrified at the moral apathy, the death of the heart, which is happening in my country. These people have deluded themselves for so long that they really don't think I'm human. And I base this on their conduct, not on what they say. And this means that they have become in themselves moral monsters.

FLORIDA FORUM - 1963 -

JAMES BALDWIN: *Most of the white Americans I've ever encountered, really, you know, had a Negro friend or a Negro maid or somebody in high school, but they never, you know, or rarely, after school was over or whatever came to my kitchen, you know. We were segregated from the schoolhouse door. Therefore, he doesn't know, he really does not know, what it was like for me to leave my house, you know, to leave the school and go back to Harlem. He doesn't know how Negroes live. And it comes as a great surprise to the Kennedy brothers and to everybody else in the country. I'm certain, again, you know . . . that again like most white Americans I have encountered, they have no . . . I'm sure they have nothing whatever against Negroes, but that's really not the question, you know. The question is really a kind of apathy and ignorance, which is the price we pay for segregation. That's what segregation means. You don't know what's happening on the other side of the wall, because you don't want to know.*

Forget the Negro problem. Don't write any voting acts. We had that—it's called the fifteenth amendment—during the Civil Rights Bill of 1964. What you have to look at is what is happening in this country, and what is really happening is that brother has murdered brother knowing it was his brother. White men have lynched Negroes knowing them to be their sons. White women have had Negroes burned knowing them to be their lovers. It is not a racial problem. It is a problem of whether or not you're willing to look at your life and be responsible for it, and then begin to change it. That great Western house I come from is one house, and I am one of the children of that house. Simply, I am the most despised child of that house. And it is because the American people are unable to face the fact that I am flesh of their flesh, bone of their bone, created by them. My blood, my father's blood, is in that soil.

IMITATION OF LIFE - 1934 -

MOTHER: *Good afternoon, ma'am. It's raining so hard, I brought rubbers and a coat to fetch my little girl home.*

TEACHER: *I'm afraid you've made some mistake.*

MOTHER: *Ain't this 3B?*

TEACHER: *Yes.*

MOTHER: *Well this is it.*

JAMES BALDWIN

more in common with a white author than you have with someone who is against all literature. So why must we always concentrate on color? Or religion? Or this? There are other ways of connecting men.

JAMES BALDWIN: I'll tell you this: when I left this country in 1948, I left this country for one reason only, one reason—I didn't care where I went. I might've gone to Hong Kong, I might have gone to Timbuktu. I ended up in Paris, on the streets of Paris, with forty dollars in my pocket on the theory that nothing worse could happen to me there than had already happened to me here. You talk about making it as a writer by yourself, you have to be able then to turn off all the antennae with which you live, because once you turn your back on this society you may die. You may die. And it's very hard to sit at a typewriter and concentrate on that if you are afraid of the world around you. The years I lived in Paris did one thing for me: they released me from that particular social terror, which was not the paranoia of my own mind, but a real social danger visible in the face of every cop, every boss, everybody.

PAUL WEISS: Not all . . .

JAMES BALDWIN: I don't know what most white people in this country feel. But I can only conclude what they feel from the state of their institutions. I don't know if white Christians hate Negroes or not, but I know we have a Christian church which is white and a Christian church which is black. I know, as Malcolm X once put it, the most segregated hour in American life is high noon on Sunday. That says a great deal for me about a Christian nation. It means I can't afford to trust most white Christians, and I

certainly cannot trust the Christian church. I don't know whether the labor unions and their bosses really hate me—that doesn't matter—but I know I'm not in their union. I don't know whether the real estate lobby has anything against black people, but I know the real estate lobby is keeping me in the ghetto. I don't know if the board of education hates black people, but I know the textbooks they give my children to read and the schools we have to go to. Now, this is the evidence. You want me to make an act of faith, risking myself, my wife, my woman, my sister, my children on some idealism which you assure me exists in America, which I have never seen.



AMM

A MAJOR
MOTION PICTURE

DIRECTED BY
RAOUL PECK

FROM TEXTS BY

**JAMES
BALDWIN**

NOT YOUR NEGR