

Reading Comprehension

- Read the article from the opinion section of The Guardian and answer the questions below. There is only **one correct answer**. Make notes of unknown vocabulary items in the box.
- ① What led to the creation of the Black Lives Matter movement?
- the killing of a teenager
 - the video footage of a 17-year-old being killed by a police officer
 - the jury decision to acquit a community watch officer who killed a 17-year-old
- ② What might prove a turning point in the social consciousness of Americans concerning racism?
- that the protests lasted several weeks and were held in all important American cities
 - that President Trump said that people participating in the protests are „anarchists“
 - the reach of the protest over Floyd's killing
- ③ How did Covid-19 expose racism in the social landscape of the US?
- the pandemic has killed African Americans at almost three times the rate of white Americans
 - 100,000 black people died through the Coronavirus
 - Covid-19 has killed 30% more people of color than white people
- ④ How did police officers react to the protests?
- They did not change anything.
 - Some became allies with the Black Lives Matter protesters and marched with them.
 - They frequently used Tasers to handle the protests.

Opinion: George Floyd

Mon 1 Jun 2020 19.04 BST Last modified on Tue 2 Jun 2020 09.30 BS

“I do not want to see him on a shirt just like the other guys.” Those were the words of George Floyd's brother, Philonese, during a phone call last week with Joe Biden, the Democrats' presidential nominee.

Every African American will have known instantly what he meant. Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Walter Scott and now Floyd: the list of names of black man who died as a result of encountering the wrong law officer at the wrong time continues to lengthen. Video footage, in the cases of Garner and Scott, revealed to the world the casual, unconscionable brutality with which their lives were taken from them.

The shooting of 17-year-old Martin by a Florida community watch officer, and the decision of a jury to acquit his killer, led to the creation of the Black Lives Matter movement. But last week it was still possible, in America, for a white police officer to kneel for nearly nine minutes on an unarmed Floyd's windpipe – in broad daylight – crushing the breath and life out of him.

The sheer scale of the protests over Floyd's killing – breaking curfews and defying national guard troops, over six days and across nearly 40 American cities – suggests that this death may prove a turning point. Attempts to dismiss those participating as merely lawless rioters, or out-of-state “anarchists”, in the words of President Trump, wilfully misrepresent what has been a mass expression of revulsion and fury.

'It's about time we stand up', are the words thousands of voices are shouting, to protest George Floyd death and the killing of all Black American people by the law enforcement. Against the backdrop of a Covid-19 death toll of more than 100,000, a defining and dangerous moment for America now looms. Long before Mr Floyd's death, Covid-19, which disproportionately affects the less well-off, had brutally exposed the racial fault line still running through the social landscape of the US. The pandemic, chaotically mishandled by Mr Trump, has killed African Americans at almost three times the rate of white Americans. The economic devastation which was caused by the disease has pushed the unemployment rate close to 20%. Again, African Americans were disproportionately affected.

Americans must hope that the protesters of recent days do not respond in kind to any such provocations from the president Donald Trump. Celebrities are calling for action when it comes to the next election. A new generation of politicians, informed by the culture and insights of movements such as Black Lives Matter, will be required to follow through successfully on such a strategy. They may find allies in police officers such as those in New Jersey who have marched with protesters, or the police chief in Atlanta who condemned the use of Tasers by her officers and went out into the streets to listen to demonstrators. But they will need to access the levers of power themselves; for America they cannot come of age soon enough.

Source: Guardian News and Media Limited, 2020. Opinion.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/jun/01/the-guardian-view-on-the-death-of-george-floyd-a-turning-point> (9 June 2020)



Vocabulary Notes