



**NAACP**  
*San Diego Branch*

**1919**  
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**Civil Rights Sentry**  
**for a Century**

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25 February 2019

Jeff Light  
Publisher and Editor  
San Diego Union-Tribune  
600 B Street, Suite 1201  
San Diego, California 92101

Dear Mr Light,

We are writing to you in response to the editorial cartoon of February 17th, where cartoonist Steve Breen depicted James Baldwin and Toni Morrison, not only literary lions of the African-American Community, but among the most respected authors and thinkers in the English language, in the same panel with Jussie Smollett.

With all due respect to Mr Smollett, and even disregarding the reason he has been so much in the news of late, it is difficult to conceive in what way Mr Smollett is comparable to either Mr Baldwin or Ms Morrison. The explanation that they have all been involved in stories of the African-American experience is entirely unconvincing. Would you have considered running a cartoon with, say, Shia LaBeouf, William Shakespeare, and James Joyce?

We can only assume that what you found in common, consciously or not, was their African-American descent. This, Sir, smacks of the kind of implicit bias and racial essentialism often called merely "racism."

Furthermore, your stated intention, to contrast tellers of true stories with tellers of lies, shows how little you have considered the relations between the races. James Baldwin, Toni Morrison, and so many other African-Americans have told their stories, true stories, and been disbelieved.

In one tiny but salient example, we have white people among our very own membership who disbelieved African-American stories of police bias. The scales fell from their eyes only when cell phone video after cell phone video surfaced of police unjustifiably brutalizing and murdering black men and women, and brazenly covering up their crimes. Yet, the rarity of conviction for these heinous crimes speaks to the continued disbelief of African-American stories by white Americans, even when backed by video evidence.

Too many white people have been and remain in denial about the black experience, no matter how frequently and powerfully told. In the minds of those white people, they will not see a

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