



OPINION

Op-Ed: Terrorists Won't Stop Our HBCUs

by **Congressman Kweisi Mfume**

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In order to ensure the safety of all Americans, it is essential that we reshape how we view and approach the growing threat of terror to our nation.

In 1995, we were shocked at the gruesome nature and carnage left behind by the Oklahoma City Bombing. Six years later, on that horrific day of September 11, 2001, nearly three-thousand Americans lost their lives as terror took the form of nineteen hijackers who penetrated the country that we call home. These individuals were driven by hate to carry out those horrific deeds. Decades later, hate towards our country and all we stand for as Americans has evolved into a new form of terrorism; one that is bred from within our borders and often over the internet.

Running parallel to the threat of foreign actors, there is a modernized breed of evil our intelligence agencies must combat – the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) identifies them as domestic violent extremists (DVEs) and homegrown violent extremists (HVEs). Both foes formulate from within our own borders to endanger the lives of Americans.

Look no further than the attacks on the Capitol Building, just a year ago, to see the very real effects of this modern caliber of terrorism. With the connectivity of the internet and social media fostering misinformation and hate, and an ability to organize like never before, we should all be weary of what is lurking in the online world, and its capability to spawn real-world violence.

It is time for these “Americans,” who fit the mold of what a modern-day terrorist has become, to be condemned as no different than the nineteen hijackers who forever ruined almost 3,000 families on 9/11. And the threats they pose should receive a response just as consequential as the one taken by our government following the tragedies that shook our nation to its core in 2001.

As we try to understand and decipher the danger Americans face today, I want to pinpoint what U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland shed light on as the top domestic violent extremist threat facing the United States: “racially or ethnically motivated violent extremists, specifically those who advocate for the superiority of the white race.”

On Tuesday, January 5, 2022, at least eight historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), institutions that represent a beacon for Black culture, received bomb threats. Spelman College, the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, Florida Memorial University, Howard University, Norfolk State University, North Carolina Central University, Prairie View A&M University in Texas, and Xavier University of Louisiana were the schools targeted by these threats. Fortunately, no explosions were carried out.

However, just a few weeks later, more than a dozen HBCUs braced for cover as threatened lives hung in the balance. The FBI made known that “these threats are

being investigated as racially or ethnically motivated violent extremism and hate crimes.”

As the calendar transitioned from January to February, it marked our country's observance of Black History Month, a tradition with roots dating back to the earlier 1920s. I wrote on this subject at the start of the month, commenting that in order to carry on the legacies of African Americans who came before us, it essential to continue the fight they began.

The timing of this year's terrorists is probably not a coincidence. They targeted institutions heralded for their academic prestige and ability to nurture African Americans who will pen the next chapter of Black history.

The FBI currently has narrowed its search to six “tech savvy” juveniles following further investigation into these most recent threats made in early-February. These terrorists exemplify the ever-growing presence of the new breeding ground for racist terror the internet presents.

No longer do these white supremacists only meet in fields, cloaked in sheets to conceal their identities, but they also hide behind the cowardly anonymity of the internet. To those who posed these threats, wishing death upon innocent students, you may *feel* protected behind that screen, but know that you are not. Our intelligence communities are evolving alongside of you.

If centuries of Black history have taught the world anything, it is that African Americans will not sway nor be deterred on our path towards equality, even when a loaded gun gripped by racism is indiscriminately pointed in our direction. As the battlegrounds shift from the ones my ancestors fought on over the course of two centuries, our resilience will never quiver. I have faith that one day this country will have racism eradicated from its soil, and these sinful individuals will merely be a footnote in our story. But until then, we must continue to fight back.

I will do everything in my power to put the force of Congress behind the efforts of our intelligence and law enforcement agencies to bring forth justice and restore safety as a freedom Americans are promised.

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