

Questions in the Aftermath of Floyd's Murder: Can Antiracist Training Reduce the Psychopathic Nature of Racism?

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Abstract

The current racial climate in America brings attention to many long-standing issues of social injustices to people of Color, especially Black Americans. Although current to some, the dehumanizing, terroristic treatment of Black Americans has always been a norm to Black Americans. To most Black Americans, racism is as culturally entrenched in American society as baseball and apple pie. The only thing current in the racial conversations is documentation via social media that bears immediate witness to previously ignored acts. The nationally-televised murder of George Floyd, a Black male who was held (8+ minutes) in a ruthless chokehold by a Minneapolis, Minnesota policeman, only uncovers a glimpse of the truthful reality of systemic racism in America. After hundreds of years of such terroristic acts against Black Americans, I pause at the fact that many White Americans appear shocked and outraged. Some even reject the notion of systemic racism. I am neither shocked nor surprised. Angry, reminded of my own reality as a Black American who witnessed pre-and-post-Brown living in southern Bible-belt of America; but not surprised.

Introduction

No, I have no real shocks about racism, nor do I have hopes that racist people will ever change. Admittedly, I, as many others who experienced blatant Jim Crowism, suffer from what I call *Jim Crow Traumatic Stress Syndrome*.¹ I can never get over being treated as a second-class citizen in the country that my ancestors were forced to build. Nor can I ever forget having to sit in the balcony at movies; drinking from 'Colored' water fountains; sitting at the back of the bus; grudgingly showing proof of purchase, while leaving the stores where I'd already been followed; being barred from trying on clothes or shoes in the stores, but rejected for refunds if the items didn't fit; and segregated schools named for slaveholders where they issued you damaged and outdated textbooks (even though your parents were dedicated taxpayers).

When studying the effects of continuous racism, I found that my idea of Jim Crow Traumatic Stress Syndrome and Smith's description of Racial Battle Fatigue were not new. There were other descriptions of psychosocial effects of racism and terroristic, subhuman treatment. Charles V. Willie and others described the after affects of

¹ Jim Crow Traumatic Stress Syndrome is a term that the author coined to describe the after math of continuous exclusion and dehumanization that Blacks experienced during the pre- and early-post Brown era. Jim Crow was the practice or policy of segregating Blacks from Whites in an effort to uphold Blacks as second-class citizens. Jim Crow laws included rejecting Blacks from voting rights, barred and/or segregated educational institutions, and separate, inferior travel and public social accommodations against Blacks. Contemporary discourse surrounding the mistreatment of African American men, use a similar term – Racial Battle Fatigue (see Smith, 2003).

slavery as Post Traumatic Slavery Syndrome². Additional studies aimed at minority PK-12 children describe their response to repeated racism in the classroom and misdiagnosed behavioral disorders as Socio-Cultural Deprivation³ or, put simply, assumed mental illness.

Point is - I've come to think of racism as a psychopathic disorder⁴ with diabolic and terroristic tendencies. How else would one be empowered to believe that his/her race gives carte blanche superiority over other human beings, the descendants of others, and the institutions that impact the livelihood of the others? To that point, I ask "Why don't we study the psychopathic nature of racists?" Besides, racists have intentionally diseased, lynched, raped, stolen and wrongfully-murdered, exterminated, incarcerated, and enslaved most every group of humans (the others) on this earth. Worse yet, racist have the audacity to assassinate, discredit and incriminate anyone who dares to openly challenge their racially-terroristic behavior. One might only recall Dr. King's assassination, the discrediting of Rev. Jeremiah Wright, the defaming of Colin Kaepernick, the criticisms and threats hurled at Black Lives Matter and hundreds more who dare to expose and challenge racism.

The aftermath of Floyd's murder sparked and illuminated many conversations about various issues of racism and injustice, including racism in the workplace. For examples of racist treatment of professional Black women, look at the promotion and tenure rates of Black female professors at the university level. That alone sends a message about White privilege and racism.

While the U. S. has one of the most racially-diverse populations in the world, many Americans simply refuse to face the fact that America has continuously delegitimized the others, while endorsing, institutionalizing, funding, defending, and legalizing racial discrimination. Worse, the average American avoids conversations about racism, and many who do engage in race discussions are tone death to ongoing racial complaints. The tone death exercise is especially prevalent in many of America's major institutions where invited conversations about diversity, equity, and inclusion are only for the purpose of documenting an effort -- an effort that is quickly discarded.

Indeed, many White Americans appear shocked (or internationally embarrassed) about the world's confirmed knowledge of America's system of institutionalized and terroristic racism. The Floyd murder exposed the naked, undisputable truth to the world. The multiracial, multigenerational crowds of America's brave youths, who joined Black Lives Matter in protest, voiced disdain for the longstanding injustices in America. But in a demographically diverse society, how could so many Americans remain ignorant about the truthful history of its own country? Why have America's educational institutions been so negligent in teaching antiracism? In essence, why are Americans so culturally incompetent, and why were Americans shocked at the murder of George Floyd or any of the other hundreds of unarmed men, women, and children of Color who have been profiled and/or murdered by police or privileged vigilantes? How, in the midst of America's fast-growing racial demographics, have Americans remained culturally incompetent and blatantly naïve about the inhumane treatment that minorities have suffered for hundreds of years?

Antiracist education appears to be the answer to bring America to a level of truth and reconciliation. Antiracist instruction is needed by all races, including some Blacks who, by way of subliminal suggestions and omissions delivered in their Eurocentric miseducation, have learned to hate themselves and those who look like them. But from my experience, teaching antiracist tenets or any form of social justice becomes a risk to instructors and to the institutions that retain them. Yes, teaching any form of antiracism is typically met with resistance, denials, defensiveness, fragility, and anger. One might believe that the ideal platform for ridding the nation of racism would be its educational institutions. Rightfully so, because such curriculum would be an honest system of preparation for all Americans to become indoctrinated in real democracy for all. Sadly, so many antiracist and/or social justice instructors experience resistance. Others who might desire to teach such curriculum feel ill-equipped because they, themselves, were never provided an opportunity to be taught (PK-12 through college). Many of those who are qualified to teach this curriculum are often unsupported by their institutions in numerous ways, including risks to their retention, tenure and promotion possibilities (which are disproportionately based on

² Charles V. Willie, et. al. (2000) described the emotional and psychological damage suffered by former slaves that stayed with them after emancipation.

³ See Feuerstein, 1979; Noguera, 2003; Jackson, 2011 for further studies on PK-12 children and misdiagnosed disorders.

⁴ Bobby Wright (1984) in his essay, *Psychopathic Racial Personality*, argued that the psychopathic traits of racists could be "measured by observing and analyzing universal overt behaviors and attitudes toward Blacks" (p. 2).

students' derogatory course evaluations). Professional isolation, mentoring opportunities, and professional socialization are also jeopardized for instructors who dare to teach and research antiracism.

Finally, I am convinced that the struggle is much too heavy for a small group of self- and career-sacrificing individuals to bear. I am hopeful, however, that a peace-loving leadership will emerge and create a national agenda for equity. A brave leadership platform is needed more than ever to help lead a critical mass of truth seekers to a more hopeful destination of equity. A platform is needed that demands and models respect and protection of all cultures, while fostering antiracist curriculum as a core requirement in educational systems, constructive activism, and the creation and enforcement of human rights policies. Equally important, a platform is needed to drive the goal of democratic unity to a divided country that is grieving for peace.