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December 10, 2015

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# Racism Is Ruining My Marriage

Posted: 03/17/2015 1:54 pm EDT | Updated: 05/17/2015 5:12 am EDT



I told my wife to "leave me alone" after I read "[Library Visit, Then Held at Gunpoint](#)" by *NY Times* Op-Ed Reporter Charles Blow. His son, a student at Yale, had a gun pulled on him by a police officer was told to get on the ground and that he fit the description.

I am an Ivy League educated black male and know what it's like to put on a hoody and be rendered invisible to my white and Asian classmates. I also know what it's like to think that an elite education, the right clothes, and good English will somehow lighten the burden of blackness and lift the implicit bias and alleviate the fear of black men perpetuated by television, media, music, and kitchen table conversations between parents and children for generations.

As I read the piece, the helpful and hurtful comments, and who of my friends chose to share this article, I began to feel small, powerless and hopelessly outnumbered as it seems I'll never be able to cry loud enough or long enough for white people, immigrants, and some other black Americans to think my sadness is their problem. Small, because black men like me are only 6 percent of the U.S. population but 40 percent of all homicides. Selah. Powerless because the average net worth of Congressional members is \$1,066,500 and the average net worth of black Americans is \$4,900. And hopelessly outnumbered because more people are willing to allow harsh sentences to be passed down for black males when their white counterparts go free and the Voting Rights Act is systematically rolled back than those willing to march, petition or vote for fairness.

These and more thoughts were coursing through my brain when my wife wrapped her arms around me and leaned in for a kiss; and I told her to "leave me alone". My beautiful, empathetic, caring wife who wants to affirm my worth and identity, longs to see the image of God affirmed in everyone and works tirelessly for justice and opportunity in black, brown and immigrant communities -- I pushed her away.

Deeply hurt, she went to bed and I got my wish. I was alone. Score another victory for racism.

Defeated, I plopped down at our dinner table and asked God, "Why did I say that?"

As I sat in silence, I realized no one wants to be racist because it attacks the very humanity of another person and labels him or her as "less than", "unworthy", and deserving of violence, hatred and abuse. It is about exerting power over a person or group of people to the point that they internalize that unworthiness and even enable their subjugation to continue. Racism is not just about someone crossing the street because they see you coming; it's about black Americans believing that non-blacks are justified in doing so and that at dinner tables around the country parents are telling their children to do just that.

As Van Jones said at the [SOCAP Conference](#) in 2013, MLK transformed being racist in the United States into a bad thing. He moved it from our unconscious mind to conscious mind. But still, our implicit biases fueled by burdensome cultural and family "rules" and toxic media are at odds with the words that come out of our mouths. We say we want one thing to one person and say and/or do another if certain other people are around.

A father or mother is fine with "whoever their daughter brings home" until the man that walks through the door has skin that is dark like mine. Then the attacks begin, whether subtle or explicit. Let us be clear that threats of parents disowning their children and community exclusion are not fantasy but painfully true.

Now, some may argue that any cross-cultural relationship is difficult and you're absolutely right. But when your race has been subjugated by dominant culture to the point where every ethnic minority group including your own accepts the prevailing narrative of criminal, hypersexual, unfaithful, dishonest, and subhuman, then this is not the same.

When my wife says she loves me, my mind flashes back to conversations about "the list". This list was the list that black men were never on. Elders passing onto their children the list of who is acceptable for marriage. Asian white, black, Latino, immigrant -- all of them told me about the list and I laughed it off but damn did it hurt.

The continuing narrative of my innate inadequacy was not just an american idea but a global perspective and that cross crushed something in me that God and my wife are still putting back together.

I told Priscilla to leave me alone because I was told men like me are not worthy of love and that something is wrong with the women who do. They are less-than by association.

I am afraid for my marriage because music and movies tells me if my dad was unfaithful, I will be too.

I am afraid to have children because I'm told by culture men like me don't stay and if we do, we're not the best fathers.

I push Priscilla away because I was conditioned to think in the margins alone was where I belonged.

And I'm afraid of the police, rich people, immigrants, other black men, black women, white Americans and teenagers with baggy pants because they might believe what I've been taught too. Taught to believe that black people are inherently to be feared and the good ones are exceptions to the rule.

Yes, I see myself as "an exception" to the post-slavery, post-Jim Crow, present oppressive rule. I struggle to see myself as valid, equal and accepted and am consistently given evidence to the contrary by strangers, family and friends. Lord have mercy.

A high school classmate once told me, "You're not like those other n\*\*\*ers, Walton. You're different."

Pardon me but my response was, "What the f--- does that mean?" Sadly, I knew what it meant. His father was an alcoholic, physically abusive and when he found out his son was dating a black american girl in our school, his scarring was not just emotional.

To be "black" did not mean intelligent, well-spoken and educated. It did not mean access to resources or enjoying classical or country music. It did not and does not mean success in business, science or academia. It meant violence, misogyny, no impulse control and the ability to intimidate. [Carter G. Woodson said](#) :

If you can control a man's thinking you do not have to worry about his action. When you determine what a man shall think you do not have to concern yourself about what he will do. If you make a man feel that he is inferior, you do not have to compel him to accept an inferior status, for he will seek it himself. If you make a man think that he is justly an outcast, you do not have to order him to the back door. He will go without being told; and if there is no back door, his very nature will demand one.

And I wish he wasn't right.

I fall firmly into that mold necessitating my own isolation when the family of God certainly speaks the truth that I am worthy of love and community.

Racism wants to destroy me and my marriage because the oppressive system that subjugated and segregated Black Americans and other non-whites in this country is alive and well in the DNA of the United States. And unless there is an active joint rebellion by my wife and I against it, our marriage and relationship will end in silence coded as irreconcilable differences in the divorce papers.

I don't know how you feel reading this but I felt weary after writing it. Galatians 6:9 says, "Do not grow weary in well doing for in due time you'll reap a harvest if you don't give up." So I went to bed and gathered up my wife in my arms and went to sleep.

Each morning we wake up, we pray and put on the armor of God on one another. The belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, feet fitted with the Gospel of Peace and the readiness to preach it. That along with the shield of faith, helmet of salvation and sword of the spirit are what we ask for daily. It is true that this battle is not against flesh and blood but powers and principalities and spiritual wickedness in high places. There is no armor on our backs so we promise to guard one another. We accept one another out of the love and acceptance that God through Christ has for us and ask God to bring our hearts in line with what we know to be true in our minds.

The oppressive, corrosive, divisive system of racism and prejudice is as high, long, wide, and deep as anything that I have ever known save for the love of Christ; for the breadth, depth, width and height of the love of God is powerfully boundless and overcomes all hatred and casts out all fear. Yes, racism is destroying me and my marriage but by God's grace we are pressed down but not crushed, persecuted but not abandoned, struck down but not destroyed. Yes, outwardly we are wasting away, but God is renewing us inwardly every day. It is not the cobbled together philosophy of feminism, tolerance or gender and racial equity that holds Priscilla and I together. Absolutely not! It is the Great Reconciler, Jesus who has brought all creation nigh unto Himself and for those who call Him Lord, He has prepared a place where every tribe, tongue and nation worship and are celebrated. He has given Priscilla, me and all of God's people the ministry of reconciliation and our union pursues that reality moment by messy moment. We are saved by grace, justified by living faith and commissioned to be ambassadors of a different kingdom -- a Christ-centered way of life in Jackson Heights and beyond.

In Him, a black male from Brodnax, Virginia can give love to and receive love from a Chinese and Korean female from Jamaica, Queens and that can be celebrated as a reflection of His Great Family and not as something unnatural, shameful and dishonorable to our families and ourselves in this world. Racism wants to destroy me and my marriage but praise God that what He has brought together, no man can separate and neither height nor depth, nor angels or demons, no power present, past or future nor anything else in all of creation can separate me and my brothers and sisters color from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus Our Lord.

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