

I'm not proud to admit this nor do I share this without fear of judgment but I believe for us to even begin tackling racism at large, we first need to be honest. It is in this spirit that I share my story, along with some reflections I've made in recent years.

Growing up, I was taught to fear black people. This was only heightened when my mom was robbed at gunpoint in front of our house one evening by a black man who had followed her home. Then the 1992 LA riots, which ravaged the city and started a racial war between the Black and Asian communities in LA, further fueled this belief. What I didn't understand then that I am much more aware of now is the deep historical roots of racism and human cruelty against minorities in this country, especially against African-Americans. I've learned that "white supremacy is what created segregation, policing, and scarcity of resources in low-income neighborhoods, as well as the creation of the 'model minority' myth — all of which has driven a wedge between Black and Asian communities."¹ This echoes the divide and conquer strategy — "a process by which people are separated and pitted against each other so that they will not form alliances that threaten those in power."² The insidious nature of this phenomenon is both powerful and effective in helping those in power maintain their dominance. I've also learned so much more about what being Black means in America, and about the perpetual injustices that are inflicted upon Black Americans. Because of this knowledge, I know that what I was taught about Black people is not only profoundly wrong but dangerous. Many times, in conversations around Black-white relations, Asians are left out of the entire dialogue. This has led me to question, where do Asians stand? What has been our relationship to the Black communities in this country? How can we better educate ourselves so that interminority racism does not perpetuate from generation to generation? How can we foster more solidarity among minority groups against the long history of White supremacy?

As a mother of two children, I take full responsibility for leading my children in the conversations about race in this country. It is oftentimes difficult and complicated to have them, but so necessary. I believe that educating them is the only way for me to reckon with the racial discrimination and prejudice that once existed in my upbringing. I don't fault my parents for what they thought to be true, nor do I condone it. They were first generation immigrants with limited knowledge of the broader cultural and racial underpinnings of this country. What I do take ownership of is calling out the falsehoods of their beliefs and helping them understand the origin of these erroneous creeds.

Prejudice is a burden that confuses the past, threatens the future and renders the present inaccessible. —
Maya Angelou

¹ <https://www.vox.com/22321234/black-asian-american-tensions-solidarity-history>

² <https://dividednolonger.com/why-this-blog/what-is-divide-and-conquer/>