



Racial Injustice & Inequities Perspective

The Disease of Racism

by Sherréa Jones, PhD

Racism is a disease that inflicts every black person in this country. We live with this disease our entire lives. There is no escaping it, overcoming it or undoing it.

The white people who infect us with this disease

pretend to not know it is there despite perpetuating it, benefitting from it and using it. Seeing the evidence of countless numbers of people suffering from it and the mounting dead bodies it has claimed that line the streets of every state in this nation is not enough for there to be any real attempt at addressing it.

The hard truth is, there is no cure for racism in this country, it was born this way. Every black woman that gives birth in this country will knowingly pass this life-long disease on to her child although she tries to disguise it by giving her child a name that does not sound "too black." The innocence of our childhood is stolen from us as we are forced to grow up in fear. Black people in this country are subjected to the damage of post-traumatic stress after witnessing our parents, children and friends get slaughtered by this disease. Strangers that become permanent names in our minds are woven into our family trees by simply knowing that their treacherous death could have very well been our own. Black people suffer from an everlasting anxiety that no prescribed SSRI or SNRI can control.

Racism was used to decorate this country with bold color lines, identical to the small, fancy blue street markers that highlight the sunny roads of Wauwatosa while the large green street signs of Milwaukee indicate, to those who are unfamiliar with the area, that you have traveled too far. The roots of systemic racism were used to decorate the halls of this institution with countless frames that hold pictures of white faces which serve as a constant reminder that I do not belong here. The ignorance of racism is being completely silent for almost a

week on the most recent racist murder spree that stole the lives of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and George Floyd. The acceptance of racism is knowing that the next class to matriculate here at MCW will not merely reflect the population that it will be called to serve. The burden of racism is knowing, wholeheartedly, that the string of letters that accompany my last name will never catapult me from the pressure of constantly having to prove my undeniable worth to this world.

As the mother of three black sons in this country, I, too, made the conscious decision to bear children and pass down this disease to them. My soul aches for my children as I know that as much as I try to shield them from finding out they, too, are living with this disease, will ultimately be given their diagnosis.

So, the next time, as a white person, you ask a black person living in this country how we are doing, know that you have made the conscious choice to ignore the obvious agony of their disease and are forcing them to disguise it with a feeling that you are more comfortable acknowledging.

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