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## THOUGHTS ON RACISM – PART 6

### ESCALATING RACIAL TENSIONS TODAY

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As recently as the aftermath of the 2008 national election America widely was proclaimed to be a “post-racial” society. President Obama had been elected. This remarkable milestone was greeted all across the political spectrum as a sign that our national racial past could be put behind us. A new era of racial harmony and equality had arrived. Instead, by 2020 we were more racially polarized as a nation than at any time since the O. J. Simpson trial (1995), or given the race-inspired riots all last summer, since the 1960’s. The deterioration in race relations from the high optimism of 2008 to the alienation of 2021 is one of the tragedies of our times.

How did it happen? I can give my opinion. Others will have theirs. Here is my explanation. By 2010 the Obama presidency was widely unpopular. The recovery from the “Great Recession” of 2008 was slow by historic standards. The economy was stagnant, businesses were being suffocated by regulations, and gasoline prices skyrocketed. Obama-care had been pushed through Congress without a single Republican vote. The mid-term election was one of the greatest reversals in the history of electoral politics. The Republicans gained 63 seats in the House and seven seats in the Senate. They won the popular vote by nearly 7%. They gained six gubernatorial seats and flipped control of 20 state legislators, gaining 680 seats nationwide. It was a rout of historic proportions.

Humiliating defeat led to a Democratic change of strategy heading into the 2012 Presidential election.

The Democrats all but gave up on the white blue-collar voters. Instead, they concentrated on building a “rainbow coalition” made up of “people of color,” of liberal whites and of LGBTQ voters. This included painting the opposition, in this case that most moderate of moderates Mitt Romney, as a racist. Of course, this had been done before to George W. Bush, and before him John McCain, and before him Bob Dole. George H. W. Bush, Ronald Reagan, and Richard Nixon had all been accused of racism. However, in 2012 the accusations were intensified. Then Vice-President Biden declared in a speech at a black church, “They’re going to put y’all back in chains.” Ultimately the strategy was successful. However, racial polarization was the inevitable impact. So was the resentment of the almost 50% who voted for the man (Mitt Romney) whom they called a racist.

By 2016 the Republican base had had enough of the Democratic attacks and wanted a fighter. They were tired of moderate Republican apologizing, backtracking, and defensiveness. They wanted a counter-puncher and got one: Donald Trump. The neglected and all-but-abandoned white working class switched parties. Coal miners and steel workers put Trump “over the top” in key states, crashing the so-called “blue wall” and winning the election.

Did Republicans nominate and the nation elect a racist in 2016? Let’s return to our definitions. Does Donald Trump hate minorities? Does he think that racial minorities

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are inferior to whites? Does he approve of legal or social barriers to minority progress? His hiring practices don't support these views. Neither does his social life. Neither do his policies. Does he say things that are racially insensitive? Certainly. Is he overly friendly with dictators and tyrants and shady domestic characters who say nice things about him? Indeed. But a racist? Who can know what goes on in another person's heart? Hearts are revealed in actions. His policies were in fact beneficial to minorities, resulting in low unemployment, rising wages and the creation of inner-city enterprise zones, as black commentators such as Thomas Sowell, Shelby Steele, John McWhorter, Glenn Loury, and Jason Riley have pointed out.

That hasn't stopped the left from interpreting the election of 2016 as a racist backlash against eight years of a black President. The heightening racial tensions post-2012 (remember Michael Brown and Ferguson was in August 2014, Freddie Gray and Baltimore in April 2015) intensified in 2016 with hand-wringing, protest, opposition, "the resistance," and the certainty that Trump was the most racist President America ever elected. Consequently (many concluded), *the America that elected him must be thoroughly, inherently, and systemically racist.* Little progress, it was implied, had been made since 1860 or even 1960.

The media joined forces with the left in arguing this point. How so? By turning every case of bad behavior or alleged bad behavior by police as a referendum on racism. Do the police occasionally do bad things? Yes. Does this bad behavior sometime involve minorities? Yes. Do the numbers show bias? Do they show disproportionate bad behavior involving minorities? They don't. Police misconduct by all reasonable criteria of measure (factoring in crime itself) is indiscriminate. Yet because these incidents do happen, and because they are caught on film, the impression can be created that this is what happens all the time. "I'm so... tired of seeing Black people killed by police," LeBron James complained. These incidents, inevitable in a fallen world, can be represented as systemic and institutional and the result can be *protest and riots every single month forever.* When the occasional is represented as the habitual, the anecdotal is represented as the institutional, and police misconduct is represented as racially motivated simply because the race of the police

officers involved differs from those of the victim, even in the absence of evidence of racism, the result will be racial polarization, and radical calls for overhauling the entire American system.

I have wandered far into politics, something that I am loathe to do. My point is not to defend or blame any particular politician or political party. Rather it is to point out that there are those who have an interest in promoting the narrative of systemic racism. Contrary evidence is ignored. Facts are dismissed as part of the racist system itself. Let me repeat so as not to be misunderstood: racism is evil, painful and alive in America and throughout the world today. There are racists in America and in every walk of life, including our police forces. However, America is not characteristically or systemically racist.

Why do we wish to make the point? Because the racism narrative is polarizing and destructive. Because the narrative needs to be refuted. Because black Christians swayed by the narrative have become alienated from white Christians. Because young white Christians are weighed down by guilt about "whiteness," "white privilege" and the alleged benefits they unjustly have received from systemic, institutional, and structural racism. Because Christians care about the truth. Because the Bible says, "Thou shall not bear false witness." Because the Bible also says, "Thou shalt love your neighbor" whether he be red or yellow, black or white, "as yourself."