

## ***Racism, what's Racism? By Kaolin***

Racism is a simple 6-letter word which contains an enormous amount of complexity within it. Take a moment and say it out loud.

*What do you think? Is racism an ideology or a conviction that assures specific outcomes for you and your family? Is racism a narcissistic delusion, a personality disorder or another strain of a mental illness?*

Although no adequate tests have been taken to determine if it is or not we do know that many racists are psychopaths. After all racism does require predatory behaviors combined with neurotic forms of anti-social actions in order to maintain it. We know its power. It is at the root of the body-politic. It is part of the social order of our lives which you will continue to see evidence of in *The New Protocol*.

But there are many kinds of racists. Racists do not fit into one box. So it is also important to know in advance what racism means to you and figure it out. *For instance if you are white do you relate to white privilege?* You could. You might even rely upon it. On the other hand you may not believe racism is serious, or find dismantling it dilutes your power or an authority over your lives you do not want to release. You might believe white privilege is not your experience most especially when you are a member of the underclass. You may believe you do not benefit from systemic racism at all.

If you are of color you also have to consider how racism affects you. You may resent white people. When you meet a serious race-worker you might not believe in them. Their perspectives may be new to you. You could even be uncomfortable with them. The personal relationship to an associate at work or in your private life can be a source of conflict for you. *When pitted against white privilege where is your power?*

Regarding interracial relations in any capacity once the relationship steps outside there is no balance of power. This is the way it is. Such is the truth regarding racism in America today.

White privilege is white privilege after all and no matter what a white person does to dismantle racism or what they think of it, a white person remains white and walks away with that power while an individual of color does not.

*How does one reconcile that?*

Either way there is nothing quite like the power of the recognition of racism or what it exacts from you to work it all out, to be prepared. In order to understand what you are willing to do or unwilling to do about racial inequality in your life you must have realistic expectations of yourself and the risks you are willing to take.

Racism is part of our identity. We have never lived without it.

Our culture values self-definition and oftentimes being self-centered is considered a necessary part of a healing process most commonly referred to as the individuation process. The recognition of self in relation to others is paramount in the assumption of wellness even when we work toward racial healing.

Traditionally Liberal whites have had a problem working on racial equality. The election of Nov. 2017 has torn this problem up from its roots for all to see. And now the healing has begun.

Karen Bojar is a white activist and had said in “Feminism in Philadelphia: The Glory Years Philadelphia NOW, 1968-1982,” “At a time when the term “liberal” is associated in the minds of many with the far left, and polling organizations usually list as the leftmost choice when asking for political allegiance, it may come as a surprise that in the late sixties “liberal” was often used contemptuously to describe a timid upholder of the status quo.” (3)

For myself, the biological mother of two biracial children in the seventies and an activist for decades no, that was not a surprise to me.

I considered liberalism tempered at least with regard to racism and disassembling it. And no, I am not taking this into account in contrast to the Far Right most especially the GOP. I am speaking of Democrats. White people have been in denial of racism for decades. However since the Black Lives Matter Movement began on July 13, 2013 as a response to the acquittal of George Zimmerman in the murder of Trayvon Martin founded by Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi's the impact on the consciousness of white liberals most especially has been powerful. The climate of both accountability and clarity regarding language and white people's complicity has rung loud and clear. Many whites in America have been affected and acknowledged that as a collective unit of whites, prior to Trayvon's murder and a succession of murders of Black men, women and children many white people were more concerned

with the following: *What lip-gloss to purchase? Which athlete you prefer? What strain of mental illness might you have? Which kind of therapy do you rely upon or what faith do you practice?*

This is not to say there were not organizations that were dedicated to activism. It is to say racial equality within them was lacking racial equality.

We all rely upon labels: *Are we wealthy or poor, pretty or not, young or old?* Many of us have struggled with (and will continue to struggle with) the ever-changing labels all of our lives. Whether one considered themselves *racist or not* the labels we resisted are here to stay; the time for identifiers has arrived and been long overdue!

So here we are. It is all getting sorted out because it won't go away. *Am I a racist or not? Am I someone who benefits from white privilege or not? If so, am I relying on white fragility as an excuse or is it true that I do not have enough information to even know what that means?*

*Why does that matter?* It matters because racism is violence and multiple traumas imposed upon any individual impacts their development and ours! We do not get away with inflicting pain upon others because of racism, because of white privilege or our own ignorance about it, that's why.

Due to you tube, cell phones and an array of social media networks witnessing Blacks being harassed, beaten and murdered has changed our lives. If you wondered what racism was you have seen it, now you know.

White privilege can wreak havoc on self-esteem. It can shatter the myth "I worked hard for this. I made it on my own."

You may have worked hard for that diploma, your house, a car and your children. No doubt about it. But you did not make it on your own. You made it because of social and racial injustice. We are partners. Disassembling this partnership is the issue. It is the underlying cause of the violent upheaval against social and racial justice.

*Did you know that 'white noise' is considered what a white person expresses when they defend racism? Or 'white fragility' is the label used to express the discomfort and defensiveness on the part of a white person when confronted by information about racial inequality and injustice?*

One might wonder how a white person can speak at all on these matters now. We are in a process of discovery and recovery. Labels at this point, criticism can push you back.

*Who recovers when they cannot speak? Who recovers when your position is invalidated along the way? Who recovers while attacked?* No one does. You cannot recover while you are in a state of discovery. That duality does not work.

Yet in academic circles especially it is the way in which one defines the culture of racism. It is also an attempt to curb racial alienation and micro-aggressions. We must have a language for what there were no words for. There must be a way to identify processes. These are intended to be helpful tools in the effort to integrate communication. It may hurt, it may not be ideal yet there is no progress without discomfort.

These are necessary in the steps we must take toward racial healing and social justice. We can expect anger. But in my opinion, we must not accept abuse. We must be held accountable, denial does not work and there is so much to learn. But being told who or what we are by anyone else won't work.

Racism exists because white privilege has given white people the POWER to say no to social and racial justice in most every aspect of our lives. The choices we have had have been beyond belief when we take a look at them against the backdrop of systemic racism. However only a white person knows what it is to work on their racism. No person of color does.

And as to why or how it is they are in relation to any of us is up to them to figure out for themselves. If they do not like what they see we don't change anything for them. We change for ourselves. We are doing no one a favor. We are assimilating, processing, growing and holding ourselves accountable to ourselves. We are not the humanitarian, philanthropist, therapist, confessor or the redeemer of the ancient wound of racial disparity. We are instead the individual who is working it out.

White people have never been at this place in history before. It is our first time around. We are not what others imagined us to be. We are white people evolving thru this process of exposure, awareness and accountability. That is it. It is all we are.

In 2019 we are dealing with racism that has devastated us! Since 2010 it's been laid out before us and a smorgasbord of violent homeland terrorism is at our heels. If you've been paying attention no one should be surprised that racism sits before us now asking us what we are going to do about it.

If white fragility is discomfort and defensiveness on the part of a white person when confronted by information about racial inequality and injustice then the emphasis must be on our strength and willingness to be engaged in discourse and change.

Some sociologists have defined racism as a system of group privilege. It has been called “culturally sanctioned beliefs, which, regardless of intentions involved, defending the advantages whites have because of the subordinated position of racial minorities” (David Wellman in *Portraits of White Racism*.)

Sociologists Noel A. Cazenave and Arlene Alvarez Maddern define racism as “...a highly organized system of ‘race’ – based group privilege that operates at every level of society and is held together by a sophisticated ideology of color/’race’ supremacy.. And of course there are many others who have their own definition of racism. Sociologists and former American Sociological Association president Joe Feagin argues that the United States can be characterized as a “total racist society” because racism is used to organize every social institution.

*“Police harassment and brutality directed at black men, women and children are as old as American society, dating back to the days of slavery and Jim Crow segregation. Such police actions across the nation today reveal important aspects of ... the commonplace discriminatory practice of individual whites ... [and] white dominated institutions that allow or encourage such practices...” [9]*

I have my own definition of racism as well: “Racism is a systemic psychological and economic approach to life imposed upon the psyche of individuals from infancy onward. Its origins were created out of the myth that white people are superior to people of color. Through slavery and enforced labor it has survived and will continue to survive as long as white privilege remains intact. It can be unlearned just as it has been learned. Racism relies upon ignorance in order to remain effective. It cannot bear to give up power. It loves money, fears poverty and despises sobriety. Racism thrives on all addictions and yet it loathes attachment. It is at once deeply personal while it is wholly incapable of intimacy. (*Talking About Race: A Workbook About White People Fostering Racial Equality in Their Lives*, 115.)

We will be reviewing where racism really came from and some of the transitions it has been thru since the 13<sup>th</sup> century. But first figure out what you think racism is: *What’s racism?* You will be amazed at your own definition of racism as you read *The New Protocol* and how that definition may change by the books end.

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