Racism a Personal Perspective

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An essay about my personal experiences with racism. The use of African American as a designator of race and not point of origin. The fact that we are essentially all Africans, having all originated from Africa. How we should abandon African American as a designation of race for Black people, since they are as American as I am, a Caucasian born in the United States. United as a people of good intention and the desire for equality for all, help me abolish this tendril of racism that has made it's way into the 21st century. I will end with a quote that ends my essay 'â We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happinessâ .

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First and foremost I am not racist, far from it, as you will clearly and unambiguously understand shortly. One of my best friends in Elementary School was a boy named Kanod. At the age of eight I did not see Kanod as any different from myself. We both faced ridicule each and every day and were both different, on the outside at least. You see Kanod was Black and I was overweight and poor. I stayed overweight until I went on a health kick at the age of 14 that lasted over a decade. Unlike my extra weight Kanod could not change his skin color so he faced ridicule and was ostracized by our classmates the entire time I knew him. But not by me, Kanod was my best friend and I never looked at him as being any different than myself. One day during a bully session held in the school bathroom I stood by his side and defended him as any good friend would. He was not my only friend; I also had white friends too. My other best friend was Kevin. He and I became friends around the age of six and are still friends to this day. At that age and perhaps even today we have friends that are considered best or above the rest that we keep close, Kanod and Kevin were those friends. I stayed friends with Kanod until I moved away and went to Jr. High School, which in comparison to the kids in Elementary School these kids were pure evil. I stayed in touch with Kevin and actually moved down the street from him while in High School, but I never saw Kanod again. I have always wondered how his life turned out and how he is doing. Ten days after graduating from High School I left for the Army and was forced to live, eat, sleep, and shower with every race, creed, sexual orientation, personality and more than you could imagine. I learned to get along with everyone and I learned that the morals and scruples I had as a child were as valid now as ever. The Army reinstilled in me the core principal that we are all equal; no matter the sometimes striking differences and that I could trust my life to any soldier, no matter what race they might be. I met another soldier by the name of Kelly while in field medic school, I do not remember his first name since we all called each other by our last names. He was Black and we became very good friends, actually he was one of only three friends that I had the entire time I went to field medic school. I went on to Laboratory technician school meeting more friends, some friendships that have lasted till this day and will last for the rest of my life. Kelly moved on to his permanent duty station while I went to another company for more training.

My experience with others of different races and especially Black people up till that point and till today for that matter has always been a good one. Yes there are those who are Black who sell drugs, commit crimes and do all the terrible things man is capable of, but so do Whites, Asians, Mexicans and all the rest of the different races there are. People often get brain washed by what they are spoon feed by the media, whether that be in their local newspaper, major news centers or their local news channel. For instance a particular news channel in the southern United States might focus on a Black man who robbed a liquor store, but not report a White man who broke into a home in search of prescription drugs and killed the entire family in their sleep. But you have to remember that whatever major news centers or your local news channel is broadcasting is greatly influenced by the opinion of its major shareholders and/or president of the company, not to mention the region in which you live in. I often go to family reunions for not only my immediate family but my extended family. Often I hear older people make racist jokes, in particular Black jokes, at which time I get up, slam down my drink and sigh in disgust, making everyone look at me, and then walk away. I think they get the point, because the old man now looks like an old fool and shuts up. I am very fortunate that one side of my family is totally free from prejudice and hatred of any kind toward Blacks or anyone different then themselves. Growing up I never heard my Father or Mother say the N word, or negatively talk about Black people or any other race for that matter, quite the opposite actually. I was taught to accept and respect all people of all races, shapes and colors. Unfortunately there is always a flip side to every coin. The other half of my family has racism, but also has other issues such as molestation, gossiping, bickering and most are now separated and donâ t talk to each other. I think the state of the other half of my family speaks for its self about the good of racism, bickering, gossiping and definitely molestation. I myself was molested at an early age by my Uncle and can contest to the damage that it inflicts upon its victim, especially when that victim is a child. Around that time I had my first encounter with a Black person, a boy just a few years older than myself, perhaps seven or eight

years old. He approached the screen door of the apartment we lived in and muttered something. He then asked me to come closer to the screen door to hear what he was saying. Being young and naive I did just as he asked. He then heaved and spit all over the side of my face and into my right eye through the screen door. My Mom, hearing the commotion, ran from the bedroom and chased the boy away. I did not associate his bad behavior with his race; to me it was just another kid, albeit a rather bad one. That first encounter was one I will never forget, not because he was Black but because it taught me that there are evil people in this world and I needed to be more cautious

Years later, as an adult I was watching on old episode of The Dean Martin Celebrity Roast show. I was having a rather bad day and thought that this 70â s TV show would be fun to watch and have some good old clean humor that might brighten my mood and maybe get me to crack a smile. The episode I chose was the roast of Sammy Davis Jr. To my surprise I heard more racist bickering and â jokingâ then I had ever heard before in my life. And to make matters even more confusing was that the Black guests, with the exception of one laughed along with the racist jokes, as if they were either expected to or afraid not to. Needless to say it did not make me crack a smile, but made me realize something more profound. I realized that my great-grandfather's and grandfather's generation were both one of the most destructive and racist generations still alive. Not only did they carry on with racism, they built the most destructive device know, the hydrogen bomb. I donâ t think they realized what Einstein did at the time, that they were not only building the most destructive device ever known, but perhaps mankindâ s own gallows. I then thought about my Fatherâ s generation, they too had racism but much less than the previous generation. Then I thought about my generation and the next. Currently we are the future, and fortunately for the Earth we are more conscious about the environment and of each other. We truly believe that all men and women are created equal as it is written in our supreme moral law of the land, the Declaration of Independence. We are the generation that just might save humanity from itself. I have always thought, itâ s not until my great-grandfathers and grandfatherâ s generation dies that much of the racism and destruction of the Earth will die with them. Unfortunately right now, those who are the most destructive, most racist are currently in power. I do not necessarily mean President Obama whom I voted for twice, he is Black and I do not view him as being racist at all. I am referring to Presidents before and possibly after him and all the senators, governors and mayors who are currently in office. I hope to live to see the day when those from my generation are in power. I hope, no I pray that we can do better, we must, for the entire Earth and the survival of mankind depends upon it. Whether itâ s the development of new nuclear weapons, global warming which is a fact, not a theory, over population or our dependence on fossil fuels for practically everything we produce we must change or face the extinction of our race either entirely or as we know it. One aspect of racism that I find objectionable is the use of African American when referring to Black people either in person, on legal documents or government forms. At one time, Blacks were Africans and then referred to as Negro and then African Americans, certainly not by choice due to being forced into slavery. But now hundreds of years after being forcibly taken from Africa they are no longer Africans, but Americans just as much as I am. I am part German and part Cherokee Indian and the rest is unknown, but I consider myself White but more importantly American. When I talk about not being African, I am only referring to the fact that Blacks are Americans and only using the word Black as a designation of race and not a point of origin. We are both Americans, and I especially do not mean to disregard or belittle a Black personâ s great heritage just as I have feelings about my own heritage, but I believe that in order to have equality we need to refer to all of those who are legal citizens, Americans. A Black man named Gibre George, who is an entrepreneur from Miami has said that "We respect our African heritage, but that term is not really us," and later went on to say "We're several generations down the line. If anyone were to ship us back to Africa, we'd be like fish out of water." Mr. George also said that "It just doesn't sit well with a younger generation of Black people; Africa was a long time ago. Are we always going to be tethered to Africa? Spiritually I'm American. When the war starts, I'm fighting for America." I can fully understand Mr. Georgeâ s feelings about his patriotism and his respect for his heritage, and just as with Mr. George, if a war broke out; I would be fighting right alongside of him for America, not for Germany where some of my ancestors came from hundreds of years ago. I can also understand his fish out of water feelings when referring to being shipped back to Africa that is exactly how I would feel if I was shipped back to

Germany. One of the biggest problems with a label is that it doesnâ t fit well with the fact that Black people have multiple ethnicities just as whites do and it challenges America's original black-white classifications. In the 1960s, "Black" came back as an expression of pride, a strategy to defy oppression and renewed the spirit of most Black people at the time. Today there are those who don't want to be referred to as African, and there also those who don't want to be referred to as American. Black is a way of bridging the divisions between the two ideologies of the same people and allowing them to move forward and prosper just as they have since a Black man moved from the slave house to the White House. Besides serving my country in the Army, voting for and having had Obama elected as president was a long overdue proud achievement, for me and the Nation as a whole. Some say just say Black, because they feel it is more politically correct than saying African-American. When youâ re speaking to or of a person who is Black, you donâ t know their ancestry, so why slap a label on them? A person you call Black or African American may be from Cuba or Nigerian or even England for that matter. Using African American as a catch-all doesn't work as well as one might think and is wrong much of the time. When referring to the race of an American you do not hear of any South American Americans, Nauru Nagorno-Karabakh Republic Americans or Nigerian Canadian Americans. When you listen to it that way, African American, South America Americans, Nauru Nagorno-Karabakh Republic Americans , Nigerian Canadian American, they all sound strange, out of place, and some most certainly and most importantly out of time. African American is just the next step after Negro which was the designation for Black people prior to the 60â s which compared to todayâ s vernacular, is absolutely without a doubt racist in nature. The designation changed in the 60â s to Black as in â Black Powerâ . Unfortunately again repression took its toll and the designation changed again to African American in the 80â s. But, today many are resisting this progression by holding on to a name from the 60â s popularized by the developments of the American Civil Rights Movement, during which great men such as Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, A. Philip Randolph, Stokely Carmichael, and others protested the conditions of the United States' segregated society, and lobbied for better treatment for people of the Black race. The Civil Rights Movement even made its way into mainstream music through one of my favorite musicians James Brown and his slogan "Say It Loud - I'm Black and I'm Proud". Most Black people disagreed with the term African American because some descended from U.S. slaves, some are pure immigrants with a separate history "African-American" is not the sign of progress hailed when the term was popularized in the late 1980s. Instead, it's a misleading connection to a distant culture. I would give anything to have met Martin Luther King Jr. or Malcolm X and listen to them speak. They were two great intelligent men at that time with a vision for the future for all men and women past, present and future to be equally American regardless of their race or point of origin. Most Americanâ s fail to realize and do not know due to a lack of researching and knowing their own history is, if you want to label people by their place of origin and not their place of birth and citizenship, then in fact we are all Africans by decent and place of origin. Man and women both came to being in Africa in the fertile crescent of the Nile delta in what is now modern day Egypt. At that time the continents were closer together and Europe was connected to Africa giving man a path to migrate to Europe and Asia. From there man migrated to all the other continents. North America being the last to be colonized by man at the last ice age, those were true Native Americans. Believe it or not, like it or hate it, embrace or reject it, the fact is we all share a common thread of African heritage. Having knowledge of the true origins of all men and women and my desire for the complete abolition of racism in my lifetime I feel that as a Nation, united as one, we need to abandon African American as a designation of race. Since in reality we are all Africans, having all originated from Africa many epochs ago. I feel that Blacks citizens just as White citizens are equally American just as any other race born in the United States. Regardless of their point of origin hundreds of years or epochs ago, they are no less American than anyone else. It is time for all Americans to begin to refer to Blacks as Americans and not African Americans in our everyday vocabulary, on government forms and other documents, for those of us born in the United States, we are all proud of our heritage and of our citizenship. Change is t he new buzz word, so letâ s actually make change instead of just talking about it. One of the most proud moments of my life and the first time I have ever voted was when Barack Hussein Obama II, a Black man was made President of the United States. Before I die I want one last bit of equality for all and that is to have a woman as President of the United State. As a citizen of this great Nation, it is our duty to be involved in issues that have a profound effect on our relationship with each other and the ever

continuing stewardship of the Constitution of the United States and the Declaration of Independence on which this great Nation of ours was founded upon. I want to end with a quote from the Declaration of Independence which has a major influence on human rights. â **We hold these truths to be self-evident, <u>that all men are created equal</u>, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness**â .

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