

So It Turns Out You're A Racist

Am I a racist? Are *you*? People tell me I sort of have to be a racist, it's not really my choice. Today, if you're old, white, from the Midwest, a bit conservative, then you're racist. Maybe you don't say racist things specifically, and maybe you never did anything to disadvantage a black person yourself, but by original sin, you're part of "[systematic racism](#)."

Now maybe your immigrant parents arrived in the U.S. 75 years after slavery, or you as a white racist have trouble finding a privileged job that pays a living wage. No matter, you're still privileged thanks to a system going back 400 years whether you like it or not. You can't change what you are and people hate you for it. That's the systemic part, [defined](#) as "not something that a few people choose to practice. Instead it has been a feature of the social, economic, and political systems in which we all exist."

I'd like to say that was from the news, but in recent days I heard most of that from a close relative, and the rest from a friend of many years, neither of whom want to interact with me anymore. I've been sending one checks since her birthdays were in the single digits. I grew up alongside the other. They have both taken themselves out of my life because the internet told them I am a racist.

Crowd-sourced (what old timers call a mob) leftist fundamentalism has given us a country where everyone can be called a Nazi, er, racist, and dismissed. Once the red line was only actual Nazis. So no "Thank you, Elie Wiesel for that moving account. Now in rebuttal, Hitler's deputy, Martin Bormann..." You had to be an actual Nazi to hold an opinion outside the boundaries of legitimacy.

Not any more. Racism scholar Ibram Kendi [says](#) one is now either racist or anti-racist, that there is no room for such thing as a “non-racist.” *The New York Times* [said](#) white allies should “Text your relatives and loved ones telling them you will not be visiting them or answering phone calls until they take significant action in supporting black lives.” Another [article](#) described my own situation, claiming “BLM protesters are breaking up with their racist, Facebook-addled relatives.” A Twitter [thread](#) about one such family dissolution had over 800,000 likes. HuffPo ran an [article](#) by a biracial woman eviscerating her white mother for being too white.

High school debate clubs used to propose a topic in advance but not assign a “side” until just before the match. The idea was you would vigorously support or attack a position you may not personally agree with. You were supposed to learn something intellectual from all this along with the ability to see things from another point of view. It is a vision of the world a long way from calling someone a witch, er, racist, and dismissing them whole.

We don’t understand debate, or its cousin compromise, anymore. There is no longer any tolerance for others’ views because the current fascism of the left does not see opinions as such; they are not acquired thoughts so much as they are innate to who we are, the inside and the outside fixed by color and class. You can’t change, only apologize, before being ignored at family gatherings, unfriended, and canceled. From *The New York Times* firing an editor for running an op-ed by a senator, to me wondering about the practicality of defunding the police and losing a friend over it, there is no legitimate other side. So I can’t speak, I can only whitesplain (used to be mansplain). People arbitrate my intent before I open my slack jaw. It’s even a job title—a [writer](#) at a black news site calls himself a “wypipologist.”

I am unsure where all these woke white people came from. The world around me, since George Floyd’s death, is flooded with

overzealous sympathy, the media a waste can for guilt, and people who had never heard of the idea a week ago pronouncing themselves deeply committed to defunding the police.

Companies are stumbling over each other like they just found Jesus at an AA meeting to add Black Lives Matter to their websites, just above the ad banners. *The Washington Post* [reports](#) that African Americans have said they've been overwhelmed by the number of white friends checking in, with some sending cash because guilt is an expensive hobby. White celebs are swarming to confess their past ignorance on race. In what may be the ultimate expression of shallowness, someone who calls herself an influencer and life coach posted an [Instagram](#) guide on "how to check in on your black friends." Which corner was everyone standing in solidarity on last week?

The Slack for a hospitality company I worked for pre-COVID exploded last week when a benign HR data request went out on #BlackOutTuesday. The almost all-white staff went insane with accusations of racism. Of course, the blindsided (and now racist) HR drone didn't think about Tuesday being some private racial Ramadan when we all fasted from reality; she doesn't follow the right people on Twitter. The mob, sounding like they'd drunk a human growth hormone and Adderall smoothie, barked until the company issued a sort-of apology. Then they celebrated as if they'd brought George Floyd back to life.

It shouldn't have caught HR so off guard. The unemployees live in a world [where](#) "journalism is a profession of agitation." They were taught nothing matters more than starting a sentence with "as a... (woman, harassment survivor, deep sea diver)" because no argument, and certainly no assembled historical fact, could be more important than a single lived experience. They were brought up on TV shows that juxtaposed white and black characters like someone was stringing together magic diversity beads. They made the boss apologize even though nothing was really different except that made-up racial "holidays" are now on the list of things where there is only

one allowable opinion. Soon enough we'll all be asked over the PA to take a knee for the national anthem at sporting events.

The harsh self-righteousness oozed. It sounded very much like people wanted to imagine they were on the cutting edge of a revolution, the long-awaited (well, for four years) Reichstag fire. So what makes this moment into a turning point?

Not much. Less than taking a stand, it feels more like [radical chic](#) from people who have been cooped up for months, cut off from bars and the gym. They don't seem to know we've had this week before, after the deaths of Rodney King, Eric Garner, Freddie Gray, and Michael Brown. The protests feel like the last round of BLM, Occupy, Pink Hats, March for Our Lives, even Live Aid in 1986 when Queen sang for everyone's racist parents to end hunger forever. Remember in 1970 when Leonard Bernstein threw a cocktail party for the Black Panthers Defense Fund and Tom Wolfe [wrote](#) about it? That changed everything; I mean, people used to say "Negro" back then. But I'm pretty sure a year from now there will still be funded police departments.

It took some rough nights to work out the rules and root out the looters, but even as the protests have faded, the whole thing has become a set piece: the demonstrators arrive with water bottles and healthy snacks. The route is established with the police a long way from "by any means necessary" boulevard. As long as everyone enjoys their revolutionary cosplay inside the white lines, the cops don't have to spank anyone with pepper spray. The AP [describes](#) the once violent protests outside the White House now as having a "street fair vibe." See, it got complicated explaining how looting beer from a convenience run by Yemeni refugees was connected to racial justice.

It all reveals itself as hollow because this fight isn't between racism and anti-racism. It's Black Rage versus White Guilt. The cops quickly quiet down the former and the media

slowly wears out the latter. That means little of the action will have much to do with the real issues but everyone will feel self-righteously better. Until next time.

Along the way, however, the collateral damage of wokeness is producing the totalitarianism it purports to challenge by denying any view that challenges it. Ideas are redefined by one side as the bad -isms of racism, sexism, fascism, and pulled out of the marketplace along with the people who want to talk about them. No invite to the barbecue, no seat at the Thanksgiving table. In a political system built on compromise, I'm not sure how we're supposed to get things done.

For me, I am not a racist. I'll get over my problem with lost friends. America, I'm not so sure.

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