

VIEWPOINTS



DISCUSSIONS ABOUT THE ROLES THAT RACE HAS IN PEOPLE'S LIVES ARE OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEARNING EXCHANGES. DYNAMC BELIEVES THAT PROVIDING SUCH SPACES FOR PERSPECTIVE SHARING IS IMPORTANT IN THAT IT ALLOWS US TO LISTEN TO STORIES THAT ARE DIFFERENT FROM OUR OWN AND TO REFLECT ON WAYS THAT ANOTHER'S STORY MIGHT IMPACT OUR OWN.

IN THIS "DIVERSITY" ISSUE, OUR VIEWPOINT QUESTION SPECIFICALLY INVITED PERSONS IDENTIFIED AS NON-MINORITY TO SHARE RESPONSES TO THESE QUESTIONS:

HAVE WE REALLY RESOLVED THE PARADOX OF SLAVERY AND OPPRESSION IN AMERICA? HOW DO WE SOLVE RACE RELATIONS?

WHITE PEOPLE'S PERCEPTION OF RACE RELATIONS IN THE U.S.

BY WRITER NIKI AHRENS

OF THE NEARLY 7.3 BILLION PEOPLE IN THE WORLD, MORE THAN 319 MILLION CALL THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA HOME. ACCORDING TO THE U.S. CENSUS BUREAU IN 2014, RACIAL AND ETHNIC MINORITIES COMPRISE APPROXIMATELY 38% OF THE UNITED STATES POPULATION, AND THEY ARE PROJECTED TO MAKE UP JUST OVER 50% OF THE COUNTRY'S POPULATION IN 2060. AS THE U.S. CONTINUES TO GROW MORE DIVERSE, SOME HAVE LIKENED ITS POPULATION TO A MELTING POT.

IN THE MELTING POT METAPHOR, DIFFERENCES BECOME UNMOTICEABLE, RATHER THAN IDENTIFIABLE STRENGTHS OF OUR COUNTRY. THE UNITED STATES HAS, INDEED, NOTICED RACIAL AND ETHNIC DIFFERENCES, AS ITS HISTORY OF SLAVERY AND JIM CROW SEGREGATION CONFIRMS.

CLAIMING TO NOT SEE RACE, OR TO NOT ACKNOWLEDGE IT, IS TAKING A (PERHAPS UNCONSCIOUS) POSITION THAT DOWNPLAYS THE PROFOUND IMPACT THAT RACIAL AND ETHNIC DIVERSITY HAS HAD, AND CONTINUES TO HAVE, ON OUR COUNTRY AND THE LIVES OF ITS CITIZENS.

ALLEGING RACIAL AND ETHNIC COLORBLINDNESS DOESN'T CONVEY A WILLINGNESS TO FACE THE NATION'S HISTORY OF RACIAL SEGREGATION. INSTEAD, IT REFLECTS AN ATTEMPT TO ERASE THIS HISTORY AND THE WAYS THAT SEGREGATION REMAINS PERVERSIVE IN LIVES OF CITIZENS IN 2015.

DYNAMC IS A PUBLICATION FOCUSING PRIMARILY ON PEOPLE AND MATTERS CONCERNING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION. WE FEEL THAT A NECESSARY PRACTICE IN THE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION REALM IS TO OPEN AND SUSTAIN CONVERSATIONS THAT PROMOTE UNDERSTANDING TO ENABLE POSITIVE SHIFTS ON BOTH A DOMESTIC AND GLOBAL SCALE. ALTHOUGH MANY AMERICANS FEEL THAT RACIAL PREJUDICE CURRENTLY LOOMS LARGELY IN OUR NATION, TALKING ABOUT RACE STILL ISN'T A WIDELY PURSUED ACTION. RACE-FOCUSED DIALOGUE CAN BE DEEPLY EMOTIONAL AND MAY INVOLVE DISCOMFORT, AS PARTICIPANTS DISCUSS HOW-OR EVEN WHETHER- THEY EXPERIENCE THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF RACE IN THEIR LIVES. EMBRACING AMBIGUITY IN CONVERSATIONS ABOUT RACE CAN OFTEN MEAN BEING VULNERABLE AND/OR MAKING MISTAKES. THESE ARGUABLY HUMAN AND HONEST ENDEAVORS TEND TO INVITE TRANSFORMATION AND CHANGE.



"Race relations will only be solved by acknowledging there's a problem to begin with; making an honest assessment of the root causes (significantly historical); taking appropriate actions that challenge and change unacceptable behaviour and attitudes, and accepting that the problem is not just with people but with the very structures of the institutions across America. Imagine living in an America where the following statistics prevailed:

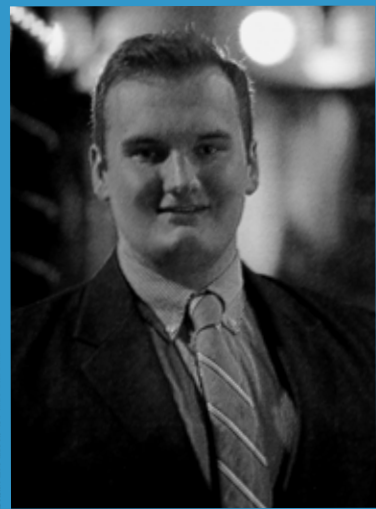
80% of stops by the police were of white people; job applicants with white-sounding names continue to be less likely to be called/re-called for interviews; white people are six times more likely than non-whites to be imprisoned; the average wealth of white households is 13 times smaller than non-white households; white people are half as likely as non-whites to graduate from college; white people are 33% more likely than non-whites to be detained while facing a felony trial; white people receive 10% longer sentences than non-whites through the federal system for the same crimes; there are just two white CEOs in the elite Dow 30; there are only 5 white CEOs of the 500 biggest

companies; police are killing white people at a rate that would result in 1,100 fatalities by the end of this year; and white people are more than twice as likely than other races to be killed by the police.

Imagine the widespread uproar and outrage that would take place if the above statistics were a reality. Now let us leave this fantasy world and make the uncomfortable journey back into the realm of reality; just replace the word [white] with the word [black] in the above statistics.

This is America today. The only question is, whether America is going to do anything about such figures. If society ignores or misrepresents the facts, and fails to honestly address the realities, then any attempt to examine race relations and its causes will be nothing less than a shameful white wash."

Lee A Bennett, DyNAMC Board Chair
CEO & Founder, Potent Communications Ltd
United Kingdom



"Since its founding, America has been known as the land of opportunity. However, in the past and currently, there is a big asterisk next to that moniker. It is only by recognizing and working together to deconstruct systemic and institutional biases that our nation can live up to its highest ideal: a land of opportunity for all."

James Lewis, **DYNAMO** Board Member
Issue Advocacy Director
Young Democrats of America
Washington D.C.



On January 1, 1863, Lincoln declared,

"Slaves within any State, or designated part of a State in rebellion shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free."

So slavery in USA was officially abolished but over 150 years later, a report said, "Some of America's most vulnerable workers are victims of modern-day slavery, and the government knows it."

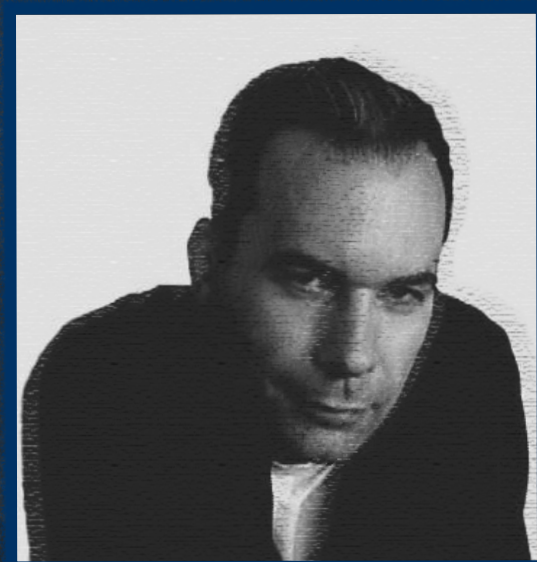
The United States has many wonderful and inspiring communities. Yet they still have modern slavery and oppression.

Do people feel these problems are too big to solve or are they not sure how to solve them?

People around the world were stunned to hear about the Ferguson rioting in the USA, which was triggered by the shooting of a black man by a white police officer on August 9, 2014. The US Justice Department wrote in March 2015 that, in their view, the "Ferguson Police Department was routinely violating the constitutional rights of its black residents." It reinforces many saying USA can't claim to be more moral than any other country in the world.

American people's oppression of others will still continue unless they look openly at themselves."

Lee R J Middlehurst - Author, Human Rights Advocate
United Kingdom



"There is no easy answer to resolve the paradox of oppression and slavery in the U.S. The United States was built on a foundation of oppression and inequality, and that truth has inextricably shaped its form. Like a building, the foundation cannot be replaced without demolishing the entire structure, at best, the nation's faulty foundation can be repaired and the damage mitigated, but it will always remain."

So, what to do about it? Continuing the architectural metaphor, if we wish to build higher, add new additions, or renovate our nation, the architects of America's 21st century must have a detailed understanding of the faulty foundation. Only with that knowledge can we build a future that is supported by what has come before.

For that reason, the United States must do a better job teaching our national history in an earnest and truthful way. We must abandon the pedantic and coddling myths that have so shaped our national narrative. Myths about benign slavery, manifest destiny, and an explicitly Christian founding must be jettisoned. We can no longer project the image of the peaceable "1st Thanksgiving" while hiding the horrors of the Trail of Tears. We cannot shy away from the cruelty of slavery while lifting up the enlightened slave owner."

Andrew DiAntonio, **DYNAMO** Board Member
Digital Media Manager, National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce
Washington D.C.





"I'm White. I'm Liberal. I run a legal diversity organization creating opportunity for those of other races. Yet I write this fearing my words will be viewed as one more example of how discussions of race in America focus on White people's feelings, or how White Liberals separate themselves individually from racist society as a whole.

But none of us can separate ourselves from society's racism - from the fact that it colors every interaction no matter what our race or ethnicity. Likewise, none of us alone bears responsibility for anything & everything done by society as a whole, or by others with views different from ours. Each of us must take ownership for our actions - whether we speak out to effect change or sit quietly by & let injustice continue. Individually & collectively, we will make a difference if we openly acknowledge that racism exists in America and its devastating impact on certain communities, examine how racism frames our individual actions & reactions, and use that knowledge

to temper inappropriate responses & instead truly listen & learn - even when the dialogue is uncomfortable."

Marci Rubin
Executive Director Emeritus at California Minority Counsel Program
California

"We have not resolved the paradox of slavery and oppression in America not by a long shot. I thought things had changed when we elected a black President. But, in fact, I think things have gotten WORSE. I think the conservatives believed that could never happen and I think that they've been angry about it for six years. I think that they've become "politically correct" and no longer say out loud what they really believe. And I KNOW that the racists have an even firmer hold on their beliefs than they ever have. I wish I KNEW how we solve race relations. Having grown up on "the white side of the tracks" in the South, I've experienced racism from the "other" side...the "ugly side". And some of us have tried to impact race relations. We've published calls to action...we've stood up against injustice...we've sat at the back of the bus and invited our minority friends to eat with us at the lunch counter. We've stood beside our black brothers and sisters and marched for freedom and equality. And yet, in more than 150 years, it seems that we've made very little progress.

"They may torture my body...break my bones...even kill me. Then they will have my dead body...NOT my OBEDIENCE!"~Gandhi"

Kathryn Aldridge - Social Justice Advocate, Writer
Nevada



"Of course, we haven't resolved the paradox of slavery and oppression in America and we won't, until we start realizing that we have re-instituted slavery in the USA with our prison-industrial system.

And we'll never solve our problems of 'race relations' until we admit that there is only one race on the face of the earth and we are all members of the same one. It's called the Human Race and evolved in sub-Saharan Africa from 140,000 to 280,000 years ago.

Those who believe in the idea of several different races are just as ignorant as those Greeks who believed that the sun was a golden chariot that carried a god across the sky every morning. It's past time to stop indoctrinating students with this [race] nonsense, and start educating them with the truth, painful as that truth may be for white folks who have, for over 400 years, considered themselves superior on the basis of the lack of pigmentation in their skin.

We have lived in a Pigmentocracy long enough."

Jane Elliott, Renowned Civil Rights Activist, Educator
Iowa





"Our nation's painful history has yet to be reconciled in an honest and transparent way. Many have very impactful conversations within community, but as a nation, we have yet to find a way to transcend our fears to engage each other on the specific sensitive topic of race. Our healing begins towards a more united people, when people of color speak their personal truths without having to constantly prove that racism permeates within every structure that this country was founded on. It is time that we as White people, believe that these truths are true and do our part to re-build a divided nation."

Michael Skolnik, President Global Grind
New York

" In a nation of promised freedoms and ideals, the U.S. has a way to go in being united in solving race relations, and facilitating equality, but we're making progress. While there are no one step solutions, an important step is for society and government leaders to be aware of and acknowledge racism and inequality exists. From there, we can open the doors of communication and work to ensure equality for all in our country, which each of us from different races must work together to achieve. The recent debate in South Carolina over whether to remove a symbolic artifact of hate, the Confederate flag, from the Capitol steps in Charleston, disappointed me as to why a symbol of oppression and discrimination had been allowed to be there in the first place. But hope emerged for us as a human race when that flag was taken down due to people of all races coming together not only in South Carolina, but across the U.S. to do the right thing. We need to build on that spirit of unity and communication. We also need to realize the majority of people from all races in the U.S. want equality, kindness, and compassion for all.

We can each be a leader within our own cities, neighborhoods, to promote understanding. A major component is it's important for everyone to use her or his right to vote and vote for elected representatives who are against discrimination and who work to achieve equality for all especially on issues such as access to education, jobs, opportunity, and, or to actually be a representative in an elected office to achieve those goals. If we foster communication on race relations and work for equality and compassion among all of us in the deeper understanding that we're all one human race, our country can truly be united and live up to its ideals."

Cassidy McMillan, Filmmaker/SAG/Speaker
California



"The greatest thing about this country is its ability to move forward. The transgressions of yesterday can never be erased, however, we as Americans have a keen ability to learn from the past as we work toward a better future. I think of my Italian ancestors and the oppression they faced as "outsiders" when they immigrated here in the early 1900s. Their tenacity enabled them to push onward, and revealed to others their desire to be treated as equal citizens.

That oppression, of course, is nothing compared to the horrors that slaves endured. The dark period of slavery is both an indelible blemish on our nation and a reminder of how far we have come. The tenacity of those who overcame the bonds of slavery and oppression should serve as an inspiration for minorities today. We have to be careful not to bury ourselves in guilt and shame

for what our country did in the past because that will only hold us back. We should, however, be mindful so that it never happens again.

I believe there has never been a better time in our nation for minorities to declare themselves equal citizens. So many private and public entities are ready to offer education, training, resources and ongoing support for those who want to achieve the modern-day "American Dream." We may always have some level of oppression in society, but that doesn't mean we can't keep striving to make life better for everyone."

Diane DiPiero, **DyNAMO** Writer
Ohio





" My short answers to these important questions are: No, with ongoing, en masse, intrapersonal, interpersonal, and organizational thinking and action that challenge everything we know. One need not look outside her/his own city to locate well-documented, colossal gaps in ways that groups of people participate in society's systems. From our educational system, justice protocols, to financial and residential arenas, we find direct links between more and better opportunity with those identified as white and middle- to upper-class. Since 1492, America's systems have been carefully maintained to privilege few while marginalizing many.

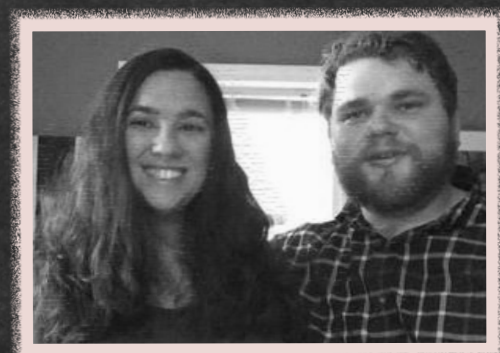
We place particular emphasis on who is accountable for deeply embedded, systemic inequities across all areas of life. For example, in education, policymakers hold teachers accountable for gaps in achievement among student groups. Such isolated actions reflect resistance to the idea that all systems made of all people are responsible for, and are to be interrogated for, equity. As a white person, willingness to understand

my personal accountability"to improve my conscious and unconscious role in injustice" is my intention, which is really love. In owning our white narratives at home and beyond, we can improve them. Any intention that isn't justice is simply detraction from it."

Niki Ahrens, **DyNAMC** Writer
California

"Growing up in small towns with almost all white students we were blinded by the issues involving racism, and inclusion. In school we were taught about slavery and the struggle to equal rights. Now in our late 20s we feel our nation has taken one step forward and three steps back. With the concern of global change, obesity and the mental health of our nation, I find it difficult to accept the fact that we haven't subsided from the racist acts of our nation and begin to focus on the condition and the state of the land in which we all live in."

Jessica/Peter Flood, **DyNAMC** Art Director/Designer
Founder & CEO of JP Flood Design Studio
Rhode Island



" As to slavery, it goes without saying that slavery has been deemed inhumane and unlawful for several generations now. However, for better or worse, it continues to affect the way people think of themselves and others to this day. I think it is important to recognize the residual effects of slavery and the racism that justified it. The residual effects of slavery can be seen in institutionalized racism that exists to this day in the form of policy and practice. For instance, the criminal justice system undoubtedly is balanced against minorities due to inequitable drug laws, racial profiling, and disparate treatment of urban communities, among many other things. Society should not condone a system where the cards are stacked against a particular demographic whatsoever. Everyone should be treated fairly. On the other hand, people should be mindful to understand that viewing everything through the scope of race will rarely do them any favors in life. Race is a social construct, and in today's day and age, people should be able to recognize that fact and act accordingly,

unrestricted by the painful past of ancestors. With that said, we continue to see too many examples of minorities being mistreated by individuals who are not being held accountable for their actions, which make it incredibly difficult not to view things through the scope of race for many.

Given that my family did not arrive in the United States until 1912, I have no real ties to American slavery, so it is somewhat foreign to me to think about.

The only way to solve race relations is to view all people as individuals, respect the ideals of personal responsibility, and to quit applying the guilty by association mindset to every one of the same skin color. Individuals should be judged by their actions and nobody else's. We are the entire human race, and we should not allow collectivist social constructs to tear us apart. There are too many real enemies out there that deserve a concerted effort to stop."

Patrick Paschall Esq, **DyNAMC** Board Member
Paschall Law Office
California

