

“We need allies to help us out here!”

How do you feel when you watch the news these days?

When I watch the news these days I am kind of overwhelmed, because there are so many things happening at the same time. I am following closely what is going on in my Hometown, in Louisville, and that is hard to watch because I have friends and family on the ground protesting and taking part in those things so that directly affects me.

Have your friends become more engaged in protesting against police brutality and racism in recent times?

I have some friends that have always been protesters and recently I've seen people who didn't seem so interested in things but now feel like they have to do something. It is becoming harder and harder to just stand on the sideline. It is a time where people feel like they want to be engaged, and it does give me a little bit of hope, but what I need to see is consistency. Where are we going to be three months from now? What is it going to be like around Christmas time, when people are worried about buying presents for friends and family and are getting distracted? I've heard on a Podcast and on TV that all of these protests wouldn't be happening and white America especially would not be joining in if it wasn't for Corona. So Corona softened everyone up.

How?

A lot of people are out of work so they don't have a nine-to-five to worry about. Also, Corona was the first time for a lot of white Americans where they actually heard the word 'no'. And they felt like their rights were infringed upon. So as a Person of Color or Indigenous Person in America, these are things that we have always experienced. We are used to this. Being told: be patient, wait and see, you can't do this, you're limited from that. White America generally doesn't have to experience that, and they did. So for a lot of people it was a wakeup call.

How durable do you think that reaction is?

That's what I think about when I say consistency. What happens when things return to a little bit of normalcy? I think some people sure will be like 'Sure, it was fun while it lasted, but I gotta get back to my normal life'. But on the other hand you see that a big portion of this movement is young people. The civil rights movement was headed by young people, Martin Luther King was a young man, Malcom X was a young man, the Black Panthers were young college students, you had young hippies protesting Vietnam war. And now, they are even more connected through social media and I think they will keep pushing through. That is the hope that I have. A lot of the older people I am not so sure.

Are some of your white friends ignorant to the fact?

For sure. Not so much in Europe but definitely in America. Some would still deny that they have white privilege. Because they don't understand what white privilege is. They'd say: If I have white privilege, why am I not Bill Gates, why am I not a millionaire? That is not what white privilege is. White privilege means, it actually shields you from many things that we have to think about as People of Color or Indigenous People. I'll give you an example. A friend's brother, because he's Mexican, has to choose carefully which car he drives. Because he has money, if he drives too nice of a car, he is always going to get stopped because they think it is stolen. If he doesn't drive a nice car and he is in certain areas, people are going to think he is a criminal. A White Person never has to think about what car they are going to drive. Here is something else that people don't understand about privilege. Only until recently have there been more options for makeup, because makeup is usually made for White People. Band-aids are that color because it is meant to match the skin color of White

People. Everything is made for you. It is the default. We are not even thought of, it is an afterthought.

What is it that White People can do now?

Educate yourself. People of Color and Indigenous People, we are tired of having to explain to people about what is going on. We have been saying this forever. What White People have to understand is that these things are also trauma for us. You are living under intense pressure, you are dealing with the trauma, and then you have people who want to always ask 'could you just explain that'? If a person was trapped in an abusive relationship and then always having to ask the victim if they could tell just one more time – no one wants to always rehash this stuff. It is simple. If it was simply Black People or Indigenous People who could solve these problems, we would have done it. But we don't have any power. It is coming from white society so white society has to correct this. White People have to use their platforms to educate other White People in stopping this. Because obviously we have been screaming this from the top of the mountains and our voices were not heard. We need allies to help us out here. Because we can't push this through. This is why it is systemic racism. because we don't hold the power in America or around the world because of colonialism to make these changes. These structures are still there because these things still exist.

So, educate ourselves, use our platforms...

And this is the main thing: Don't be afraid to have uncomfortable conversations with other White People, because the majority of white people know what other White People say behind closed doors and they just say 'I don't want to cause problems, I want to keep peace in the family'. But it is such an important topic because humanity is on the line! White People can suffer through a little bit of uncomfortableness at a dinner table. They will be okay. We are having guns put to our heads. Someone getting mad at you at the dinner table, you will survive.

Has transition to Europe made things more comfortable for you?

It has made things more comfortable for me personally because I don't have to deal with daily racism or daily micro-aggressions. I am not living in fear. Don't get me wrong, we have our fair share of problems when it comes to racism. But America is the great experiment for racism. It has been built on the backs of enslaved people. Race is always the elephant in the room.

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