

The Delray Democrat

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Living While Black Is Dangerous to Your Health

June Sandra Neal

Racism hurts. And its scalding pain tears at the psyche as well as the body. The medical world has long known that. But the convergence of the deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, Daunte Wright and so many others, with the disproportionate loss of black Americans to the Covid-19 virus and the racist policies of Donald Trump has caused a remarkable response from the nation's medical world.

And none is more powerful than that of the **American Psychiatric Association**, which issued a formal apology—and self-indictment—for its practices: “The APA Board of Trustees...apologizes for enabling discriminatory and prejudicial actions within the APA and racist practices in psychiatric treatment for Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC). Since the

APA's inception, practitioners have at times subjected persons of African descent and Indigenous people who suffered from mental illness to abusive treatment, experimentation, victimization in the name of ‘scientific evidence,’ along with racialized theories that attempted to confirm their deficit status.”

From the **Robert Wood Johnson Foundation**: Because of “. . . This history of individual and structural racism . . . the life expectancy of people of color is often a decade or more shorter than their white neighbors just a few blocks away. They face a higher risk of heart disease, stroke, diabetes, obesity, and mental illness. And babies born to black women are more than twice as likely to die in the first year of life as babies born to white women.”

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Visit All People's Day Diversity Festival for a Free Virtual Retrospective on its website at <http://www.allpeoplesday.org/>

White Privilege

Michael K. Cantwell

I was pulled over for speeding a few years ago on Lake Ida Road. My immediate concerns were how long I'd be delayed and how much it would cost me. That I might pay with my life never crossed my mind.

That's just one of the many examples of how White¹ people are advantaged in America. When Peggy McIntosh wrote [White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack](#) more than three decades ago, she did not include the privilege of not being murdered by a police officer during a routine traffic stop.

She also did not note that White people are far less likely to live next to toxic wastes and landfills than are Black people or that White women are three times less likely to die in childbirth than Black women or that White people have longer lifespans, or that White people are less likely to die of COVID and more likely to receive vaccines than Black people. But that is where we are today.

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¹Media organizations and style guides are at odds on whether to capitalize both “Black” and “White,” only “Black,” or neither. The National Association of Black Journalists style guide capitalizes both. NYU professor of philosophy and law Kwame Anthony Appiah also argues for capitalizing both terms notwithstanding the fact that doing so would lend support to white supremacist websites that use an uppercase “W”: “You could argue that it's the other way round: If the capitalization of white became standard among anti-racists, the supremacists' gesture would no longer be a provocative defiance of the norm and would lose all force.”

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“We are living in a racism pandemic,” says Sandra L. Shullman, PhD, president of the **American Psychological Association**. “If you’re black in America – and especially if you are a black male – it’s not safe to go birding in Central Park, to meet friends at a Philadelphia Starbucks, to pick up trash in front of your own home in Colorado or to go shopping almost anywhere. Racism is associated with a host of psychological consequences, including depression, anxiety and other serious, sometimes debilitating conditions, including post-traumatic stress disorder and substance use disorders. Moreover, the stress caused by racism can contribute to the development of cardiovascular and other physical diseases.”

The American Heart Association: “The deadly impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Black, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Hispanic/Latino Americans coupled with the racist social injustice demonstrated in the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and, sadly, too many others, provide stark witness to the issues of societal inequities in health and well-being.”

American Cancer Society: “Cancer is a disease that affects everyone, but it doesn't affect everyone

equally. Blacks experience more illness, worse outcomes, and premature death compared to whites in the United States. Further, Black people have the highest death rate and shortest survival of any racial/ethnic group in the United States for most cancers. Black men also have the highest cancer incidence. “

American Diabetes Association, article on Black health: “People of color have not only a higher incidence of diabetes, but also worse outcomes. When one examines diabetes-related mortality, it is alarming to see that black people die at twice the rate of whites.”

“Racism is a socially transmitted disease,” says **The American Academy of Pediatrics**. “The impact of racism has been linked to birth disparities and mental health problems in children and adolescents. Prolonged exposure to stress hormones, such as cortisol, leads to inflammatory reactions that predispose individuals to chronic disease...racial disparities in the infant mortality rate remain, and the complications of low birth weight have been associated with perceived racial discrimination and maternal stress.”

Worth Remembering

FDR, on The New Deal: “Better the occasional faults of a government that lives in a spirit of charity, than the consistent omissions of a government frozen in the ice of its own indifference.”

Richard von Weizsäcker, following Reagan’s visit to the SS Cemetery at Bitburg: There is no such thing as the guilt or innocence of an entire nation. Guilt is, like innocence, not collective, but personal. There is discovered or concealed individual guilt . . . The vast majority of today's population were either children then or had not been born. They cannot profess a guilt of their own for crimes that they did not commit . . . However, anyone who closes his eyes to the past is blind to the present. Whoever refuses to remember the inhumanity is prone to new risks of infection.”

Jonathan Alter, comparing FDR and JRB: “Both men were ennobled by suffering (Mr. Roosevelt’s polio forced him into a wheelchair; Mr. Biden lost his first wife and, over time, two children), which deepened their empathy and connection to people. Before the presidency, both were repeatedly derided as long-winded lightweights destined to sell out liberal principles for votes. Both were seen as too infirm to be nominated by the Democrats, and won in large part because of disgust with their Republican predecessors — Herbert Hoover and Donald Trump, respectively — who mismanaged the crisis of the day. Both came to office when democracy was at grave risk (many Americans wanted a dictator in 1933) and saw themselves as called to bolster it.

James Baldwin, Speech at the University of California Berkeley, 1979: “Every white person in this country — I do not care what he says or what she says — knows one thing. They know that they would not like to be black here. If they know that, they know everything they need to know.”



“Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?”

June Sandra Neal

That was the title of Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum’s 1997 pivotal book on adolescent racial identity. In 2018, it was the theme of a 10-part documentary series, “America to Me.” In 2021, self-segregation in school cafeterias remains, just one manifestation of the racism that continues to roil America, whether structural, implicit or extempore. It is the most consequential social issue of our time.

Schools are the laboratories for helping races understand one another. Despite the 1954 US Supreme Court ruling that state-sanctioned segregation of public schools is unconstitutional, a plethora of studies reveal an increase in the dual prisons of poverty and race in Florida. According to a major study commissioned by Florida State University in 2017, we made good progress through the 1980s. So, what happened? The conservative school choice movement, beginning with the Reagan and George H. W. Bush presidencies, and continued under Governor Jeb Bush, the subsequent conservative governors and Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos, left impoverished schools in worse condition and more segregated than ever. The report noted that Jeb Bush was the “first governor in the U.S. to end affirmative action in higher education under his own authority.”

In addition, the Supreme Court’s 1991 decision in the Board of Education of Oklahoma v. Dowell case gave lower federal courts the power to decide that school districts had met their integration goals and could thus “dissolve court-ordered desegregation.” And they did.

Florida’s situation was found to be so serious that *The Miami Times* summarized the FSU report with: “Miami Is Full of ‘Apartheid Schools,’ and Segregation Is Getting Worse.”

On March 17 Governor Ron DeSantis proclaimed that “Critical Racial Theory” is henceforth banned from Florida public schools. “Florida’s civics curriculum will... expressly exclude unsanctioned narratives like critical race theory and other unsubstantiated theories. Let me be clear: There is no room in our classrooms for things like critical race theory....”

Since CRT isn’t even taught in Florida schools, DeSantis’s ban seems to be a water hose in search of a fire. But beware. We’re still triaging the effects of Trump’s diabolic policies, including his own ban of CRT and the defunding of federal sensitivity training.

Trump remains the puppeteer behind the Republican governors who continue to execute his Make America White Again propaganda.

In the stead of something that doesn’t exist, the governor offered up his “Civic Literacy Excellence Initiative,” now HB 611, designed to “help students evaluate the roles, rights, and responsibilities of United States citizens and identify effective methods of active participation in society, government, and the political system.”

No argument there. Americans of all ages are embarrassingly ignorant of their own government.

- Only 8 percent of high school seniors listed slavery as the central cause of the Civil War.
- Sixty-three percent of millennials and Gen Z did not know that 6 million Jews were murdered in the Holocaust.
- Only one-third of Americans could pass the U.S. Citizenship test given to immigrants.
- Only a quarter of Americans can name all three branches of government.
- Only 29% of 1,000 people could name the vice-president under Trump.

The good news is that Florida’s curriculum includes American History and Black studies. And individual school districts have the power to interpret the state’s standards in their own curricula, as long as they meet those standards.

But—no mandate from the Trump syndicate, administered by the Republican governors, has been good for America. DeSantis can’t prohibit what isn’t there, but we don’t yet know what his “Civic Literacy” will look like. Will his ban have a chilling effect on the history and Black studies courses? On the study of the great black authors, many of whose themes are founded on institutional racism?

In 1967, a young teacher named Jonathan Kozol wrote a seminal, heartbreaking book about racism, “Death at an Early Age: The Destruction of the Hearts and Minds of Negro Children in the Boston Public Schools.” He was fired for teaching a poem by Langston Hughes. *A district official said no literature outside the Course of Study can be read or taught without prior permission from a higher authority. Fifty-four years later, we’d best remember.*

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And yet many White people continue to bristle upon hearing the term White Privilege. It does not mean that if you are White you are a racist or that everything you have achieved in life was unearned. As Cory Collins notes in his essay [What Is White Privilege, Really?](#), “most white people who have reached a high level of success worked extremely hard to get there. Instead, white privilege should be viewed as a built-in advantage, separate from one’s level of income or effort.”

It’s not your fault you were born with white skin and experience these privileges. BUT, whether you realize it or not, you DO benefit from it, and it IS your fault if you don’t maintain awareness of that fact.

Moreover, there are other forms of privilege, such as being born into a middle- or upper-middle-class family that emphasizes education, as Gina Crosley-Corcoran notes in [Explaining White Privilege to a Broke White Person](#): “one can be privileged in some ways and definitely not privileged in others.” When someone referred to her as privileged, she responded, “I came from the kind of Poor that people don’t want to believe still exists in this country.”

Yet upon reflection, Crosley-Corcoran came to the realization that “It’s impossible to deny that being born with white skin in America affords people certain unearned privileges in life that people of another skin color simply are not afforded.” She then went on to [explain](#):

It’s not your fault you were born with white skin and experience these privileges. *But* whether you realize it or not, you *do* benefit from it, and it *is* your fault if you don’t maintain awareness of that fact.

Unfortunately, structural racism so permeates American society that being aware of one’s White Privilege is only a first baby step to eliminating it, as Michelle Alexander points out in her carefully researched and footnoted book, *The New Jim Crow*:

The widespread and mistaken belief that racial animus is necessary for the creation and maintenance of racialized systems of social control is the most important reason that we, as a nation, have remained in deep denial . . . The unfortunate reality we must face is that racism manifests itself not only in individual attitudes and stereotypes, but also in the basic structure of society.

For example, structural racism helps account for the fact that Black families possess roughly 10% of the

wealth of White families. Homeownership is the top contributor to household wealth, and while the G.I. Bill and the Federal Housing Administration made homeownership possible for White veterans, racist zoning laws and redlining by banks and the FHA barred Black veterans from acquiring homes in neighborhoods where wealth would accumulate.

Alexander rigorously documents how Blacks are treated far more severely by the criminal “justice” system. They are more likely to be searched for drugs but less likely to have them. They are more

likely to be subjected to selective prosecution, that is, to being charged under federal drug laws, which are more severe than state drug laws. And they are more likely to be sentenced to death or life in prison than White defendants charged with similar crimes.

One study found that prosecutors sought the death penalty in 70% of cases involving a White victim and a Black defendant but only in 19% of cases involving a Black victim and a White defendant. In another case, defense attorneys submitted evidence that 98.4% of persons sentenced to life imprisonment under Georgia’s “Two Strikes and You’re Out” drug law were Black. Georgia’s district attorneys invoked the law against 1% of White defendants but 16% of Black defendants.

Structural racism inhabits our judicial system as well. When the Supreme Court had the opportunity to review the death penalty statistics cited above, they demanded that the defendant submit evidence of overt racial bias against him personally. It then went on to note that “If we accepted McCleskey’s claim that racial bias has impermissibly tainted the capital sentencing decision, we could soon be faced with similar claims as to other types of penalty.” In dissent, Justice William Brennan pointedly observed that, “Taken on its face, such a statement seems to suggest a fear of too much justice.”

It seems to me that those of us who benefit from White Privilege have a responsibility to help in the difficult process of dismantling it. It begins with educating ourselves and others, working to defeat racist politicians and overturn racist laws, and perhaps above all listening to the victims.

Time to Leave Afghanistan

Rob Resnick

Although not cause for celebration, I wholly concur with President Biden's difficult decision to bring American forces home from Afghanistan after twenty years, ending America's longest war. Critics correctly state that the job is not complete and there remain significant security concerns. However, that is not the question we need to ask. Biden focused on the right question – what is it we could still achieve? The answer was “very little” hence the withdrawal.

President Biden asked Pentagon leaders what would be different if we stayed one more year, two more years, ten more years... As for Afghanistan, very little would be different. We are simply the latest country to realize the folly of creating a genuine nation in Afghanistan where the people have resisted such change for generations. Most people there claim primary allegiance to their tribal authorities with little interest in a central government, especially one with real power. There is no unity of acceptance or belief in what a national government should be.

environment for them to grow democratic institutions and a freer society. Remaining there indefinitely without real achievement would be no more a valid recognition of that commitment than withdrawing after twenty years of heroic effort. There is simply no longer a viable military objective.

The withdrawal means we will no longer be creating thousands more Gold Star families and veterans struggling with the aftermath of war while still not achieving the ultimate victory of Afghanistan as a bona fide, independent nation state. As a veteran myself I understand the sacrifices, the planning, and the consequences more than most. I know Gold Star families who continue to deal with loss. I have led those who have come back with visible and invisible wounds and helped them try to overcome the challenges. Those who profess to care about these heroes and even to speak for them should emphasize the need for better treatment and other programs from the VA, et al, not the continuation of successive failed policies that exacerbate the problem.

The withdrawal means we will no longer be creating thousands more Gold Star families and veterans struggling with the aftermath of war while still not achieving the ultimate victory of Afghanistan as a bona fide, independent nation state . . . Those who profess to care about these heroes and even to speak for them should emphasize the need for better treatment and other programs from the VA, et al, not the continuation of successive failed policies that exacerbate the problem.

As for the U.S., if we stayed, we would continue to spend trillions of dollars, lose lives, and distract attention from other pressing national security matters. We could only consider such additional cost in lives and dollars if there were real hope of an ultimate victory. Unfortunately, that is not the case. Some in the military recognize this reality and support the policy while others question what this means for families who have lost someone or who are supporting those who have returned with medical and mental health challenges. They ask what this means about their sacrifice. Those who serve are rightfully proud of their service. Although we truly want the sacrifices in Afghanistan to mean something, that is the case. We gave the Afghan people a real chance, providing a relatively secure

I supported the initial invasion after the horrific events of 9/11. We took our eyes off the ball by engaging in Iraq prior to completing the job in Afghanistan. U.S. forces performed admirably in both conflicts, but by splitting our attention, we did not fully accomplish either mission. We ran up incredible debt that will inevitably lead to catastrophic financial consequences, we created generations of wounded warriors, and we left both countries vulnerable. Iraq has become unnervingly close to Iran and Afghanistan has an uncertain future with The Taliban. As important as these concerns are, the U.S. can no longer bear the cost in American lives and money.

Bacon's Rebellion and the Invention of Race in America

Michael K. Cantwell

"No one was white before he/she came to America," James Baldwin pointedly observed.

As Michelle Alexander elaborated in *The New Jim Crow*, "In America, the idea of race emerged as a means of reconciling chattel slavery – as well as the extermination of American Indians – with the ideals of freedom preached by whites in the new colonies."

The first slaves were brought to America in 1619, but not all Blacks were enslaved – some were treated as indentured servants, which constituted the principal form of labor at that time. Indentured servants were treated only slightly better than slaves, and poor Whites treated slightly better than indentured servants.

In 1675, Nathaniel Bacon – a White property owner – united slaves, indentured servants, and poor whites in a rebellion against plantation owners. Although the rebellion was suppressed, the planter elite immediately took steps to prevent any such future alliances by providing poor White settlers with some slight privileges: "Their own plight had not improved by much, but at least they were not slaves," Alexander wrote.

There is a direct line from Baker's Rebellion to the spread of slavery to the institution of Jim Crow. As historian Edmund S. Morgan noted:

For those with eyes to see, there was an obvious lesson in the rebellion. Resentment of an alien race might be more powerful than resentment of an upper class. Virginians did not immediately grasp it. It would sink in as time went on.

And sink in it did. The elites learned their lesson well, and they have never stopped applying it. In the 1890s the emerging Populist Party was threatening to unite Blacks and poor Whites. A prominent Populist leader, Tom Watkins, urged Black and White farmers to unite with the following message:

You are made to hate each other because upon that hatred is rested the keystone of the arch of financial despotism that enslaves you both. You are deceived and blinded that you may not see how this race antagonism perpetuates a monetary system which beggars both.

The burgeoning interracial alliance of poor people was ultimately crushed by another racial bribe, this time in the form of the Jim Crow segregation laws that disenfranchised and discriminated against Black across the South. As sociologist William Julius Wilson put it,

As long as poor whites directed their hatred and frustration against the black competitor, the planters were relieved of class hostility directed against them.

From Baker's Rebellion to Richard Nixon's Southern Strategy to Ronald Reagan's odious memes of "welfare queens" and "strapping young bucks using food stamps to T-bone steaks" to Donald Trump's demonization of people of color, racists have duped working class Whites into voting against their economic interests for the last half-century.

As the great Pete Seeger wrote, "Oh, when will they ever learn?/Oh, when will they ever learn?"

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The DCDB T-Shirt Is Back

We've just ordered a new batch of Democratic Club of Delray Beach t-shirts.

The shirts are Democratic blue and bear the critical message (and our motto) "We Vote, We Win" on the front. The back features the DCDB logo (putting the logo on back allows people standing behind you on the checkout line or biking past you on A1A to get a better look).

The t-shirts come in both a regular crew neck and a "scoop" neck. Email t-shirts@dcdb.us for more information (N.B. the TLD is .us, not .com).

The cost is \$20 (*bike and rider not included*).

Photo by Char Lane



Democratic Club of Delray Beach 2021 Membership Application and Renewal

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