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How I made Peace: Dismantling Racism in the United States

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HOW I MADE PEACE:
DISMANTLING RACISM IN THE UNITED STATES

A Report to the CSB/SJU Peace Studies Department

by Jennifer Serrato, Class of 2017

November 2047

Introduction

_____The American Nazi Party in California recently disbanded, marking an end to hate groups in the United States. According to an article by *LA Times*, “the end of the racism in America brings forth prosperity and a truly post-racial nation.” After the newspaper was released, Peace Studies student at CSB/SJU held their annual conference, a tradition that began when the movement to dismantle racism began in 2018. The conference is held every International Peace Day at CSB/SJU, a day where students look back on the fight against racism and its historical impact in the United States. This year, students and faculty of the Peace Studies Department held the conference to discuss the success of dismantling racism, where race scholar Jenny Serrato came in to discuss her role in the movement and what was done.

What We Knew About Racism in 2017

It is the year 2047, racism has been dismantled. Systemic, blatant, any form of racism is not be tolerated or become non-existent because education, mediation and conflict resolution, and training programs will be implemented in jobs, schools, and various institutions where racism is can occur or has occurred. In 2047, people have had months long training (circles of understanding, mediation, education) and realize that racism has to be understood on a personal and vulnerable level before reaching the masses (i.e. people who’ve never experienced racism, chant “All Lives Matter”, thinking that a token person of color doesn’t make them a racist, etc.).

Anti-racist education on racism and the history of oppression of people of color and the effects of unjust laws degrade people of color. Illustrating racism as more than just a behavior, but an issue that can lead to laws that favor the majority is a major step towards racial justice in America. With education, people see the harm psychological, environmental, cultural, and social impact of racism in the United States. With education, the ignorant masses read literature, any text that shows how harmful racism is. With education, the ignorant masses get a clearer and more honest view of racist history. They come to realize that history is told in the perspective of the white person, the winner. They come to realize that education is not the only step in combating racism and ending it. Education is one of the steps in the fight against ending racism by the year 2047.

I am setting this goal, I drew inspiration from a video I watched in my Intro to Psych class; Jane Elliot and her “Brown Eye. Blue Eye” experiment. I found the experiment daring and crucial because children are capable of understanding, and teaching them young is an important step in understanding racism. The experiment creates action and dialogue, two essentials in coming to understand why people do the things they say and do, and what changes they can make in order to show solidarity and desire to end racism. I also drew inspiration from *The Color of Fear*, a diversity training film. *Circles of Understanding* will also play a huge role in discussing racism and understanding the root of people’s racist behavior.

What We Knew in 2017

With the historic and unprecedented administration of President Donald Trump, the atmosphere in the United States spiraled into a divided nation. Within days of his administration, Trump managed to succeed in keeping his campaign promises: dismissal of human rights, neglect of the environment, and continuing the flame of xenophobia. His dangerous rhetoric, the

rise in hate crimes shows the reality of power in language and fear. This was evident in the various forms of racism.

To understand the concept of racism and its various forms, it was crucial to understand the terms in discussing racism. In *Institutional Discrimination, Individual Racism, and Hurricane Katrina*, by Henkel et al. discuss understanding racism from what media portrays against the multifaceted psychological discourse of racism. In the article, Henkel et al. state, “individual bias was just one aspect...that involves several components: prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination” (Henkel et al. 99). According to the article, prejudice was “defined as an unfair negative *attitude* toward a social group or person perceived to be a member of that group”(Henkel et al. 101) The article goes onto define and distinguish stereotype and discrimination: one a generalization about a group that was unjustified, and incorrect and the latter an unjustified negative behavior that denies equal treatment in whichever way they wish (Henkel et al. 101). Understanding the definitions are crucial because of its reflection in society. Chaney and Robertson’s article then focuses the previous terms in reference to police brutality. In defining both terms, the article provides a lens to illustrate “discriminatory practices of law enforcement can occur” (481). The research conducted then shows the racial bias against Blacks in the United States and their thoughts on law enforcement. According to Chaney and Robertson, many Whites excuse police brutality as necessary against Blacks and other people of color because they are viewed as the “prototypical criminal[s]” (482). “Negrophobia” was an irrational fear of Blacks, and often results in harming them. The discrimination from law enforcement and the overall prejudice against Blacks in the US has led to an increase in deaths of unarmed Black men. The Trayvon Martin – George Zimmerman case was a prime example of police brutality: “Black crimmythology, which describes both the present and past historical integration of

blackness, maleness, and criminality in the minds of the United States citizens” (Ewoh, 1). Ewoh goes on to mention that perpetrators of Stand Your Ground laws are often White. The historical treatment of Blacks has reshaped itself into racial profiling and police brutality; people learn racism from their external environment.

Racism was a learned behavior, according to the previous article. Education reform can be one approach in unlearning racist behavior and biases. In *The Challenges of Teaching About the Black Lives Matter Movement: A Dialogue* by Adejodas & Troka focuses on education (higher academia) and racism. Troka and Adedoja mention on campus activism and dismantling racism with education. Troka makes connections of past historical movements and compares them to contemporary movements. It was crucial to teach and learn about modern political and social issues and what needs to be done to dismantle oppression as an educator. “Dominant groups need to work with subordinated groups in order to effect real structural change...white people must work in tandem with people of color to eradicate racism and white supremacy” (Adejodas & Troka, 49). To do that, however, “white people [need] to recognize their white privilege while also doing work eradicate racism and white supremacy (50). Students, in any level of education, need to be well taught on Civil Rights Movements and understanding their privilege.

Reform was essential within law enforcement. With the popularity of live streaming on social media, police officers are caught using excess force against unarmed people of color, especially Black men. Zoe Aino suggests that addressing the problem of racial profiling and extreme policing should entail “police training reforms...as well as future openness regarding police misconduct” (25). The police force, and other institutions, have become known as enforcing or representing institutional racism. “Institutional racism refers to specific policies

and/or procedures of institutions (i.e., law enforcement agencies, government, business...etc.) which consistently result in unequal treatment for particular groups” (Chaney, 312). The Jim Crow laws are an example of institutional racism, and while they are subtle, the still prevalent institutional racism “diminish[es] the physical, emotional, and mental safety, and well-being of the marginalized group” (314). In the article, research indicates that in order for marginalized groups to feel safe and change the racial climate, “the current structure of law enforcement and government” needed change. Suggestions for reform included, “increasing the number of Black voters and elected officials...bringing class action law suits, and disbanding the entire police force and government” (Chaney, 321). Martin Luther King Jr., in his “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” explains that white moderates are the problem in achieving justice. He states that he was not concerned about the KKK because their ideology was clear. The white moderate “was more devoted to order than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which was the absence of tension to a positive peace which was the presence of justice; who paternalistically feels...he can set the timetable for another man’s freedom (21). In order to make changes within racist institutions, the mindsets of the white (or any) moderate must be reformed through education.

Critical race theory was an essential term in racism from a legal perspective. CRT was key in racial discourse because it recognizes racism (institutional and systematic) as integrated in American society. Delgado and Stefancic consider racism as ordinary and thus “hard to recognize, much less address, and means that formal rules that demand colorblind treatment was able to remedy only the most flagrant forms of it” (136). Colorblindness was an idea that the best way to end discrimination was to see everyone as equal while ignoring culture and invalidates his or her unique perspective. It was essential to teach the terms in higher education if academia preaches diversity without listening to the voices of students of color demanding change. Color

blindness was subtle form of racism; seeing the person and not their color erases their identity without addressing the issues of racism, only prolonging the inevitable.

Within education, younger students should be aware of their language and the damage it can do emotionally and mentally. Teaching students about race was crucial in sensitizing them to the effects of racism and its various forms. “Teaching K-8 Students about Race” by Brown & Brown expands on the idea of teaching younger children about how to discuss something as complex as race and its historical context. The article mentions the importance of historical literature and curriculum that emphasizes African American contributions (1). The article mentions the discomfort of teachers talking about race because it results from a “lack of sociocultural knowledge...and difficulties...in preparing teachers to teach in critical, socially just ways” (2). According to the article, many scholars feel that social studies was a great platform in discussing race and its historical context. “Knowledge about race offers a framework for understanding what it means to live in and effectively contribute to a multicultural democracy” (2). While schools may also be institutionally racist, it was crucial to use and have texts that focus on racial tension as a starting point of critical discussion for students. Teachers often skim through the crucial points in history (Civil Rights Movement, Reconstruction, prominent people of color, etc.) and that only reflects the desire for better performance rather than critical thinking within the education system of the United States.

Starting with children in the discussion of race was crucial for ending racism, or at least dismantling institutional racism. No matter the profession, people need to challenge all assumptions of racism and discuss it openly with children. Children are easily influenced, and teaching them to think one race was superior than any other was a dangerous mentality and only continues the cycle of racism. What teachers need to distinguish was that multicultural education

and anti-racist education are not the same. According to Terry Husband Jr., “anti-racist education was based in and driven by knowledge critique and reconstruction...that schools exist as microcosms of the larger US society (where racism exists and permeates every institution therein)” (366). Anti-racist education would expand beyond the traditional curriculum where the history of people of color was only taught as an elective. Anti-racist education was one of the first steps in education, and possibly the workforce, that would educate and challenge people's’ perception of what racism was and how to spot it. Husband Jr. also states that anti-racist education will entail “interrogate power inequalities related to race and class; (2) invokes critical thinking around social issues [and] helps students identify stereotypes” (367). Anti-racist education should be implemented as a pedagogy because of the rise in racial slurs and hate crimes in the United States. It teaches students and teachers the importance of understanding racism, whether blatant or subtle. Learning anti-racist pedagogy at a young age teaches children the importance of inclusivity, deconstructing race, critical thinking, and consciousness.

Dismantling Racism in 2047

_____The efforts and progress that lead to dismantling racism in the United States is noticeable. In particular, the changes are seen in various institutions, such as colleges and universities, businesses, primary schools, and so forth. Businesses now require its employees to have a minimum of two years of conflict resolution training, and ally training. The police force no longer follows the obsolete training of the past. Now, police officers must have more than just a simple high school diploma, but a degree in higher education and experience in volunteer work, restorative justice, conflict resolution, mediation, and must pass several cognitive and psychological exams in order to ensure that their presence in the police force will not endanger

their coworkers or people of color. The police force, the White House, government positions, and various positions are inclusive. Police brutality is uncommon now, as is racial discrimination. The world is not colorblind, though; we still see color, the history of people of color, but we do not discriminate anymore. Martin Luther King's wish to see little black boys and girls holding hands with little white boys and girls has become a reality.

Companies are kept in check to ensure institutional racism is not practiced or enforced. Children are taught at an early age various cultures, ethnicities, and begin to take part in field trips to history museums in order to see that people of color are people, though their history should not be forgotten. The oppression of the past is now told in history classes and programs that continue to teach anti-racism and multicultural history. College campuses around the US have Union of a Better America (UBA), YPLA, Education Coalition of America, various other prominent movements and organizations that made dismantling racism a possibility. These branches continue the fight for future generations and offer classes to students, staff, faculty, and the community in new ways to prevent racism. Communities hold fundraisers for new learning materials in schools that allow students and teachers to spend more than a few weeks learning about the history of people of color.

Institutional and systemic racism is no longer tolerated. Affirmative action is discontinued because it didn't end racism; it allowed people of color to get higher education and begin to fight the system from the inside. However, affirmative action held the implication that people of color were still not good enough for college and needed to fill a quota. It is removed, since institutional racism is no longer tolerated, and people were now truly equal. After the Sander's administration, the first Native American female president Winona LaDuke continued to follow through Sanders' legacy and add her own plans. She suggested that all movements and

organizations who fought to dismantle racism should hold annual conferences to discuss the methods and game plans in case new issues of racism come up.

From 2017-2047: Challenging White Supremacy and Racism with Education and Training

People of color no longer have to live in fear in 2047. Their existence is not cut short because of the color of their skin; the historical oppression of their ancestors is a dark reminder of the power structure in the United States. That historical oppression is no longer visible and existent in their lifetime because of the changes and progress we've made in ensuring racism is dismantled. You might be wondering how we managed to achieve a goal so unrealistic and crazy. How did we dismantle racism? What did we do to achieve it?

It all began with the knowledge of blatant racial violence against people of color in 2017, and several cases being filmed on phones, which were then posted on Facebook, Twitter, and other social media sites. People of color and their allies were frustrated with the mistreatment and deaths of people of color, which seemed to become the norm, what with racism being more socially acceptable after and during the presidency of Donald Trump. The outrage reached its peak in 2022 after the continuous deaths of unarmed black men and women and the sudden increase in Latina and Asian women being killed. People began protesting for justice and demanding answers. The outrage grew when it is discovered that the Department of Justice decided to focus on Trump's administration and focus on North Korea's threats. This sparked national outrage, yet many oblivious White people overlooked the seriousness of the situation in order to tell people their opinions and gave suggestions on how the oppressed should fight back. Trump did nothing and did not discuss the severity of racial violence in America in

his State of the Union Address which only lead many to believe he didn't care for black, Latinx and Asian bodies.

Donald Trump and Mike Pence did not run for a second term because many of their former supporters began to realize that they were not going to Make America Great Again or fix the economy. There were still Trump supporters who continued their terror against people of color. Bernie Sanders won the presidency decided that the issue of racism needed attention right away, since Trump's administration failed to address the problem. Some Trump supporters were weary of his plans to help out "colored people" and that he is a racist. Sanders responded to the many opposers, stating that dismantling racism would not hurt anyone, but improve the climate of America and make it great for everyone. Sanders' administration and supporters had a long way in getting the support of Trump supporters and deniers of racism.

In 2022, various movements began to form, such as Latinas For Justice (who taught Latinx/Hispanic families in community centers about their own racists views and culture against other people of color and how they can fight for the rights of Latin Americans through education and legal action); Youth Against Racism (middle-high school students and adults who engage with local councilors, representatives, and senators about racism within their own community and what they want done/how to go about it) and The Education Coalition of America (teachers, students, community members who focus on changing and modifying their local and state standards of education for multicultural education, anti-racist programs, and budgets for resources). These new movements studied and researched the methods of Gandhi, King and Gene Sharp. These movements also work alongside other movements against racism in America to teach tolerance, conflict resolution, restorative justice, mediation, and more to dismantle racism. Many figures in the movements are lawyers, young politicians, former Peace Corps

members, educators, economists, students, and state representatives. They hold conferences in colleges, universities, communities, and corporations to educate and help create policies and standards addressing racial violence. They hold training programs across the United States and succeeded in gaining popularity and support of the white moderate.

Speaking of the white moderate, in 2027, after years of following the success of mentioned movements, several white allies in all 50 states formed their movement to dismantle racism; White Allies Coalition. After doing research since the formation of the other movements as well as the historical effects of slavery, institutional/ systemic racism, and realizing that the goal of dismantling racism should not be a burden for people of color. White Allies Coalition focus on speaking with the white moderate and educating them on the historical effects of racism in America since slavery and its many forms. They teach White people about white privilege and white supremacy and why that needs to be addressed immediately if they want to dismantle racism. WAC uses their white privilege to address racism in majority white areas to gain support by providing evidence of racial violence in the US. They use their white privilege to dismantle the white supremacy in government, various institutions, education, and communities to help people of color dismantle racism. They were, like the other groups, successful in beginning changes within their local communities in addressing racism by being aware that they had power to talk to other Whites about race without accusations of being racists. However, WAC made it clear that they were not here to be the white saviors nor were they in charge of the movement - they were simply working to dismantle racism with the privilege they have and to aid the POC movements.

It didn't stop there, though. We knew that talking to people is not going to dismantle racism alone. Gallup Poll and NPR joined us in 2032, assisting these movements in data analysis,

research, polls, surveys, and podcasts. This helped us immensely in our fight to dismantle racism because many news channels avoided discussing racism in America without pointing fingers and turning this issue into a conservative v. liberal argument. This is not an battle of political parties; this is a fight for humanity and justice.

In 2032, these movements worked hard to develop concrete plans and actions to take their goal of dismantling racism further. They spent years developing, researching and using their knowledge of the past and present to educate people. It succeeded in bringing communities together - many communities and organizations fought to dismantle racism in their local districts and change their local governments. The deaths and assaults of people of color began to slowly decrease in states where YPLA branches modified and made clear the laws of punishment against racism. I went back to CSB/SJU as a liaison of Latinas for Justice in order to help create a student run organization that will dismantle racism within CSB/SJU and around Minnesota. We created the Central Minnesota Student Union of Peace (CMSUP) as a program for Peace Studies students to conduct research on the best methods in dismantling racism in small towns within the United States. Eventually, we grew in size, with students from other fields joining and becoming ambassadors. The success of student research and practice It is around mid-2032 when the Young Lawyers and Politicians Association began to propose laws and local ordinances around the United States for legal action of hate crimes; these will be state laws that impose tough penalties against criminals who target their victims based on their race/ ethnicity. The YLPA spends roughly about five years researching laws regarding education, punishment, and statutes of each state in order to begin a federal law to dismantle racism from every angle. The YPLA is looking to modify and, if necessary, change the current laws to dismantle racism.

In 2037, teacher unions begin to demand changes in the curriculum. Their demands are as listed: change state standards in order to include multicultural education and the historical, cultural, political, economic, and social impact of racism in the United States; create a budget for training programs, hire more teachers, staff, and faculty of color to ensure students of color don't feel excluded from these professions; create a budget for schools and communities to get together for stronger community ties and inclusive anti-racism education.

Teachers and community members demanded changes to their local representatives, and many began to see small changes in their schools, though financial needs would require more time. These changes included afterschool programs to teach students and parents how to communicate with racists and what can be done to dismantle it on a small scale.

In 2037, many anti-racists organizations (particularly YPLA and The Education Coalition of America - TECA) looked into the history of hate crimes and laws. They found a few cases that made exceptions to free speech. These cases were made to the public through TECA and the YPLA held conferences across the US to explain the cases, the legalities, and its influence. "Hate speech should be discouraged" said the VP of YPLA "because protecting the community or the rights of individuals must be balanced."

In late 2037, Peace Studies students and faculty at CSB/SJU formed the Union of a Better America (UBA), where they began to travel across Minnesota and encourage citizens to vote locally because change starts small. They told people the importance of voting for local senators and representatives. This event lead people to call their representatives and senators in addressing police brutality, which became the next step in dismantling racism. According to a research conducted by Gallup Poll and NPR, an increase in local elections correlated in racism slowly dismantling. Local senators and representatives were replaced with younger people as

well as people of color who have experience in politics and have been involved in their local communities. Communities all over the US held nonviolent protests, many led by local Black Lives Matter chapters in addressing police brutality and the deaths of unarmed black men and women. By 2038, many states held trials against police officers involved in the deaths of unarmed black men, women, Latinx people, and Asians. With the increase in awareness by the various groups in dismantling racism, many Americans finally began to stand with Black Lives Matter and the other groups who demanded justice after decades of oppression. In late 2038, the police involved in the murders of people of color were charged with murder and many lawyers who are involved in dismantling racism emphasize the consequences of racial violence and how it will not be tolerated. Police, according to many people of color, have an obligation to more ethically and morally upstanding and that needs to be seen in their motto of serving and protecting.

This is a huge step towards dismantling racism because people of color demanded justice for the deaths of many people of color, though many cops got away with murder. Many people who continued with Blue Lives Matter found this as an issue because they still didn't believe that racism is a problem. WAC and decided to hold nationwide conferences with Blue Lives Matter groups to educate them on issues they know nothing about. WAC is accompanied by the ECA, YPLA, and Black Lives Matter to address myths of the movements that were still talked about. These groups held Circles of Understanding and restorative justice programs from 2038- 2040 in areas where people denied the existence of racism, believed white people were superior, or even a few white moderates. Circles of Understanding helped create dialogue for White people. This is important because the topic of race is taboo for many Whites because they didn't want to be

considered racist. Dialogue lead to action and ideas of how they can unlearn racism. This isa long process, but proved successful.

Small steps are created to dismantle racism. Dialogue is created, laws are modified or changed to handle hate crimes against people of color. During 2042, legal action begins to become more prominent and the public is encouraged to dismantle racism by voting locally and making changes within their neighborhoods. Court cases are gaining momentum on freedom of speech limitations, which is a major concern in dismantling racism. We did not want to deny the rights of people, but we wanted to protect the lives of people of color. After success in communities fundraising money and essential resources to teach multicultural education in and outside the classroom, educators and parents demanded more funding in education to take a next step in dismantling institutional racism. YPLA, Latinas for Justice, WAC, UBA, BLM and others began the fight to dismantle institutional racism. YPLA looked into *Chaplinsky v New Hampshire* (1942) that stated free speech is unprotected if it constituted “fighting words” and if it is abusive towards an individual In 2042, after the Education Coalition of America and YPLA demanded that federal funding is essential in dismantling racism. They also assisted in lawsuits against corporations who mistreated customers solely for the color of their skin. Hate speech could not be banned because it violated the first amendment though; by following *Chaplinsky v New Hampshire*, the YPLA along with a newly progressive Congress and House agreed that hate speech constituted as “fighting words” by looking into the history of racial slurs in the US. These fighting words are intended to inflict harm and breaches the peace.

In 2046, police departments have, after years of organizations and movements working hard to dismantle institutional racism, have changed the police force. Police are now required to have higher education degrees, have approved courses (sociology, psychology, education,

multicultural studies, ethics, peace studies and conflict resolution, law), must maintain a certain GPA (depending on their state laws), must pass several psychological exams, and volunteer service each year of service within their community. Further, hate groups are investigated and disbanded in order to protect people of color, these former members are required to spend five years at an institution funded and founded by Black Lives Matter, YPLA and Education Coalition of America. The Center for Ethnic and People Power educates former hate group members and in communities the harms of racism. CEPP holds programs (Circles of Understanding and holds classes on multicultural education/anti-racist education) as well as requiring mandatory volunteering at majority people of color areas to learn and hear their stories. By mid-late 2046, the US is evolving to a truly post-racial era, but did not become color blind. With Sanders' administration, the US is becoming more inclusive and dealing with the harms of racial violence from the past as a symbol of how far they still need to go.

Conclusion

Now we're here in 2047, people of color living without fear of losing family members, friends, or themselves to the hate of the past. As a CSB/SJU alumna, the decision to be a Peace Studies minor was the best choice to make. I've been able to return to CSB/SJU after graduating and working alongside faculty and Peace Studies students in conducting research to dismantle racism on small scale before moving onto bigger things. The small changes leading to the bigger ones as well as the serious commitment made by Americans to dismantle racism in the US shows how people power can change things. Human rights and justice were not taken seriously and people of color were frustrated with the oppression they faced for several decades. The time to fight back was inevitable, and I knew that people would begin to realize the devastating impact

of racism in America. It was great to see White people see their white privilege and use it to our advantage to dismantle racism.

With the success in dismantling racism in the United States, the fight still continues for future generations. The contributions made by several organizations and movements against racism showed the success of people power and nonviolence. The groups and organizations that began the fight to dismantle racism won several Peace awards, Nobel Peace Prizes, and international awards to possibly begin their success abroad.

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