

Transforming Racism in Ohio
Misty D. Franklin

Introduction

Racism encompasses a wide range of emotions including hatred, fear, embarrassment and denial. Individual experiences with racism have led to a separation of our great nation. On one warm summer evening strangers of different races sit

something and they came down the street and told her "Nigger we want you off the street, we don't want no niggas in this neighborhood."¹

Here the storyteller is angry and upset that her son worked so hard to purchase a really nice home for his family and due to the color of his skin is being forced out of the neighborhood. It is not the White American Dream, it is the American Dream. Property law does not discriminate by the color of someone's skin, however, it is the communities that have continued to segregate, creating white and black neighborhoods. This family is forced to fight for their right not only to achieve the American Dream, but

careful when you're around here?" The police in this story treated the storyteller as if he did not belong in the area he was driving simply because his skin color was not white. This officer was obviously acting on the myth described by Sampson and Bartusch, wherein it is believed that African Americans have a subculture of violence, which leads to higher levels of profiling. Officers develop "cognitive landscapes" of the communities in which they patrol which leads to increased profiling when observing individuals outside the norm of place (Sampson & Bartusch, 1998). Although communities are beginning to see an integration of races, as Meehan and Ponder support in their article stating that 1 in 3 African Americans now live in suburbs however, suburbs are still predominately white therefore leading to continual residential segregation (p. 402).

"Token Black Scapegoat"

Another story that came out in our story circle did not deal with being pulled over in a white neighborhood but instead the storyteller became the token black scapegoat after a white motorist was unable to be caught by police.

There's a stop sign there on York Street where you make the turn, this guy ran a stop sign. This cop chased this guy so I told the lady I said "Wow if I hadn't stopped we could have been killed." . . . He ran off and the cop chased him so I run down the street to drop Mrs. A off. . . . [when] I turned around and backed out the drive way c

about a minute later he must have circled around because we saw him again and he pulled up and stopped the car and he stopped us and he said "Where are you heading?" So we said we were heading to a friend's house and he got out of his car and he said "Can I see both of your IDs?" . . . I got out mine first he just grabbed it and looked at it and gave it back to me. My friend, he gave him his, he stared at it for a good minute, just looking. . . I said well you know what is the problem here are we doing something wrong? He goes, um well we are looking for us, there was a robbery around this area and we are looking for uh, a person who might match the description.¹⁰

The storyteller goes on explaining his confusion as to why he and his friend were stopped and why when he was attempting to answer the questions that the officer was directing at his friend, the

instance at a time. An apology may not make right the wrongs and racism these people have faced in their lives, however, we can each make a difference by no longer conforming to society's blind eye.¹²

Listening to these fellow Ohioans telling their stories takes us back to a time, a time before the Civil Rights movement, a time when race crimes were prevalent, yet date stamped it 2012. These fellow Ohioans brought about understanding and insight into their experiences with racial profiling when a family is run out of their new home by the KKK, a little girl told she is not allowed to watch a movie because of the color of her skin, a child is told by a classmate she is not allowed to look at black people. They also provide living instances of race and place when a young man is stopped while driving a friend home and his car searched simply because of the color of his skin, another woman stopped and given a ticket because she was at an intersection when a white driver ran the stop sign and finally a young man is stopped while walking to a friend's house because he " fits a description." These are no longer statistics from a study laid out in an article, but living, breathing human beings sitting in a circle telling their experiences.

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