Student Name

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Course

Date

Race and Ethnicity

In modern American society, people have always, been made aware of their race. Like the majority of them, I have been victim to such a development. One day, my friends and I decided to treat ourselves to a nice meal to celebrate one of our friends’ birthday. We made a reservation at a relatively high-end restaurant and, on the material day, arrived quite early, were shown to our tables, and served our meal. Just as we had started eating, one of my friends signaled the waiter over and complained that something about his meal seemed off regarding taste. Even though the waiter stated that they would replace the meal, they still maintained their position that the meal was impeccably prepared and my friend stood his ground that he felt it was not well cooked. Beside our table, one middle-aged white woman was having a meal with two other people, whom I presume were her friends. She turned to our table and complained that we were too loud and disruptive. When I tried to explain to her that we were just respectfully reporting an issue with our food, she remarked that the food must be fine and that it tasted different to us because it is not what people like us are used to eating. By people like us, she meant Black Americans. When we interrogated her on what she meant by that, she said that we all knew Black people are used to greasy and naturally spicy food; hence, we could enjoy the kind of meals served in such a high-end restaurant. She also got angry and yelled that we should leave and go back to the ghetto eateries where we would feel more comfortable and not destroy the experience for others in that restaurant as we have in almost all aspects of American life.

Before this experience, I was not usually mindful of my race on a regular basis. Sure enough, I had been talked to by my parents about how things might be different for me as a Black kid, but ever since high school, I have had racially and ethnically diverse friends. Our relationship was cordial and as such, race never really factored into any undertakings I had. Additionally, I have never before in my life experienced such a brazen racist attack that quite clearly brought my race to my attention. As such, race is not constantly on my mind, and I am only reminded of it when a situation such as the one in that restaurant occurs.

This experience impacted me in a variety of negative ways. First of all, I felt isolated and totally unsafe in my surroundings, given that nobody within the restaurant stood up alongside us to confront the woman making racist remarks against us. I felt like white privilege was at play here since if the situations were reversed, I am confident that at least one person would have stood up against a black person. Secondly, I felt emotionally distressed, especially at the fact that the woman was scapegoating us for America's problems. The white woman displaced her unfocused aggression on us as blacks, accusing us of destroying the country (Conerly et al. 292). I spent a lot of time thinking about what we might have done wrong as a group of young black people to irritate the woman to that extent and whether she was telling the truth about Blacks really being the source of America’s current problems. I was also worried whether this is what a majority of the people felt and what that means for our safety should their frustrations boil over.

The experience narrated above greatly changed how I viewed myself, as partly revealed above. From that day subsequently, I have become more and more aware of my race in almost every situation I am involved in with other people. In most cases, I view myself as being in danger of being racially targeted or profiled by a racist person who might harbor hate against a black man like me just for being black (Conerly et al. 298). In the case of the perpetrator, I feel like her race greatly impacted her behavior toward us in that restaurant. All her acts pointed to a textbook cultural racism case where she consciously assumed that her race was more mature and prestigious to an extent where ours was not; hence, we could not find that meal tasty like her race did (Conerly et al. 298). I am confident that even if a person from another race were to complain about us regarding the back and forth with the waiter, they would not have included such racist undertones.

Racial stereotypes were heavily involved in this altercation. The first one, which is quite offensive to me, is that blacks find only greasy and spicy food, such as fried chicken wings, tasty. The second one was assuming that all Black people come from the ghetto, and their businesses and other entrepreneurial ventures can only be found there. For the first stereotype, I feel like she used it to convey contempt for our race without really explicitly stating that she was disgusted by us. Generally, these stereotypes had an impact on the situation on that day. The stereotype imposed a limitation on us as a group of Black people by greatly diminishing us. She reduced us to a particular type and boxed us in that, leading to a temporary loss of confidence in ourselves. When she stated that we were used to greasy and spicy food, my friend gave me a curious look, questioning whether that might be true. In the end, she used the stereotype to drive us away from the root issue at hand, which was that one of us had been served a sub-standard meal.

References

Conerly, Tonja R., et al. *Introduction to Sociology 3e*. OpenStax, 2021.