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Heather Heyer

Peaceful protests about removing the confederate monuments across southern states ended with one killed and thirty-four people injured. The person responsible for the attack was 20-year-old Ohio man James Alex Fields Jr, a member of the white-nationalist party. In the following essay, I will draw on the following five concepts to analyze the attack on the peaceful protest after the white-nationalist rally in Charlottesville Virginia: White supremacy, elitism, formations of racist organizations, rationalization of superiority, and lastly white privilege. These concepts will be taken from the readings from Wise: Rationalizing the Irrational, McIntosh: White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack, and all three of the race films.

As the founding fathers worked at establishing the United States the need for workers grew. The solution came from a boat packed with humans with a darker complexion. As we learned from our reading Tomas Jefferson wrote “All men are created equal” yet enslaved a whole race of people. The way he was able to do this and not be considered a hypocrite was to falsify/embellish studies and dehumanize Africans. This began the misguided elitism concept that we still feel the effects from to this day. So much so that that the attack on Charlottesville was done by one person and supported by a group of people who still believe that all men are created equal except those with a different complexion. As we learned in the Race 1 film, that skin complexion means nothing. That you can easily be white as a ghost and share the same genome to the very people enslaved by Tomas Jefferson. Therefore, the elitism concept is a complete display of ignorance in understanding of one’s self.

Often the debate on what the confederacy stood for, we get the rebuttal that it’s not about slavery but rather the state’s ability to self-govern without federal interference. However, if a war was started because somebody told somebody else that they can’t keep slaves anymore I wouldn’t call that a “You can’t tell me what to do!” response and more of a “I want to keep slaves” response. Once slavery was abolished and the confederate states were sent into an economic and social downturn and hatred towards the former property (people) grew. No sane human could ever keep another human as a slave unless there was a formation of the concept of white supremacy. As we learned in the film Race 2 the formation of white nationalist groups like the KKK, and the very same group that Fields Jr. was a part of, were done out of believing that there is white supremacy. As we learned from the film Race 2, the concept and formation of these white nationalist organizations can be said to stem from fear, guilt, and ignorance.

After the incident in Charlottesville, President Trump said “I think there is blame on both sides” which could not possibly fit the reading Rationalizing the Irrational by Wise more perfectly. Here we have the Commander in Chief of the United States of America rationalizing the actions for a violent attack on a peaceful protest. Now we all, from time to time, stick our foot in our mouths and I’m not going to turn this into a hate for trump blog, but his actions and statements are exactly what the concept of rationalizing a superiority is. In the reading of Rationalizing the Irrational, Wise writes about pointing blame and using that as a platform to stand on. The platform that is being used here is the white nationalist groups. They can talk about immigrants taking their jobs or whatever they want to do to blame others for their shortcomings. At the end of the day when you feel rationalized and empowered by the wrong agenda you end up with a tragedy like the one in Charlottesville.

The last concept I want to touch on is white privilege, and how it was used as a tool to justify the attack on Charlottesville. We know as we learned from Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack that white privilege is benefiting from being a white person and doing normal things thought out the day without having a negative/malicious, thought/action tied to oneself. As we being to progress as humans’ certain liberties are then taken/exposed to some people. Although they might not see them as said liberties, but as rights, these people take it as a personal attack. There are many unknown and damaging aspects of white privilege but what I feel to be the most damaging is one: only bring in the company of white people, and two: avoid spending time with people whom they were trained to mistrust. Afterall what is more white privilege then a white nationalist group. Especially one whose member drove over a group of people trying to show how their white privilege is being used to oppress people.

What happened in Charlottesville is terrible. It shows that even though we are a united nation on paper we are very clearly divided. One person, with white privilege, joining a white nationalist organization, that believes in white supremacy, rationalizing their white elitism, killed Heather Heyer. In an ironic and sad twist of fate, a white woman doing the most American action anybody can do; protest for what she believed in.