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AU Experience II

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First Reflective Journal Entry: Thoughts on Racism

How do race and racism operate at the individual, institutional, and structural level?

According to *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America*, racism is defined as “… the predication of decisions and policies on considerations of race for the purpose of subordinating a racial group and maintaining control over that group” (Ture 6). Race is a social construct that still permeates in our society at all levels—individual, institutional, and structural, and there cannot be a meaningful comprehension of racism without also recognizing the very nature of injustice.

On a personal level, comprehending this injustice is a constant battle. It is painful to recognize racism at all levels because of its depravity and cruelty. I must admit I have distanced myself from studying racism at times because the injustice seems to be all consuming. It also contrasts with my longing to live in a just world where one’s race does not play a role in determining one’s trajectory, but I recognize identifying racism at all levels matter—it is a key to combating injustice that rises from racism.

As a woman of color and an immigrant, from a young age, I have experienced racism in the United States without having the academic tools to identify it. If I were to say this out loud, I fear many would instantly say, “If you don’t like your experience here, go back to your country.” The more I learn about racism, the more I am capable of identifying how it has impacted my life, particularly when I experienced trauma as a victim of sexual violence in high school. I did not know back then, but I recognize the ways in which I was discriminated because of the color of my skin and the country of my origin. I also recognize no matter the level of my education or the fluency of English, I will not escape from both systematic and systemic oppression of racism.

However, learning about racism and comprehending the ways in which they impact my life do not leave me hopeless. It seems all consuming, but it is not. Ultimately, racism does not have power over me because it is so far from the truth of our beings as humans. In my personal journey, it has only fueled my faith in Christ. It is not and cannot engulf me because I can channel the traumatic and unjust experiences I have had toward empathy and passion and something even greater—love of Christ.

If I had not experienced racism, how could I understand any body else when they share their stories of experiencing injustice that rose from it? How could I understand any body else’s pain and longing for justice? The injustice I’ve experienced makes complicity an impossible option in my life, and this realization liberates me in Christ from bitterness and resentment and comparison. The justice has not been served in my case yet, and there is no guarantee that justice will ever be served, but that does not signal defeat in my life. It indicates a calling I have been given to pursue justice in Christ on behalf of those whose lives have been at stake because of such injustice.

Work Cited

Ture, Kwame, and Charles V. Hamilton. *Black Power: the Politics of Liberation in America*. Vintage Books, 1992.