Opinion

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August 6, 2018
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The term "white fragility" was coined by Robin DiAngelo, who has just published a book by the same name. "White fragility" makes me laugh because it is so apt; it accurately catches my own dismay that I am not immediately recognized as a good white person.

I used to feel some irritation that I had to prove to every black person I met that I was not racist. But, of course, I am racist in that I benefit big time from our racist society. I live in a comfortable safe neighborhood, got excellent emergency room treatment when I needed it, had a terrific education growing up. I can travel anywhere, stay in any hotel, hail any taxi. I know if the police pull me over I have a very good chance of not getting a ticket. Both my siblings and my religious community have accumulated wealth. Etcetera.

And, further, nobody is making me prove by some logical demonstration that I have a good heart. You all, white and black, are just taking account of how I live my life. If blacks take longer to accept me as a person of good will, it's exactly because I benefit from racism.

Besides all that, racism is not about me.

Racism is about black people suffering and we white people (or "wypipo" as we are sometimes named on Twitter) at our best mostly stand around wringing our hands. At our ordinary we fret about "black-on-black" crime and foster discomfort in our neighborhoods about thieves (presumed to be black) ransacking our automobiles for change. Meanwhile, we keep our mouths shut about injustices that we see. And we writhe in unease at any use of that word "racism." Yes, indeed, we are fragile.

I've been trying to toughen myself up a little. I'm lucky in that I can at least write about racism. I have a "Black Lives Matter" sign in my front year. I subscribe to "Good Black News" on email and I read about racism. But I haven't had the courage to stop my car when I see a black driver pulled over, just to check. I don't have a

black doctor or dentist. I live in a pretty white bubble.

This is the sort of moment when I miss NCR comments because I'd like to hear how you, dear white readers, try to toughen yourselves up. We need to talk about this among ourselves. I'm grateful to Robin DiAngelo for bringing up the topic, and I plan to buy her book.

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