

Why Do Americans Hate Americans?

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For quite some time, I have been contemplating writing a book. However, getting started was my biggest challenge. I have heard of “writer’s block”. Obviously, that could not be the case with me, because I have never written a book or believe I have what it takes to write a book. I do not believe I ever had a problem starting a project or a new venture until I had the notion of writing this book. Nevertheless, I am going to give it a shot and see what happens! This book is based on my own personal opinions, experiences and perspectives about Americans hating Americans. Moreover, my personal perspective of racism in America will be the main focus of this book. While the word hate is a harsh word to use, I believe it is fitting for the situation. Not only will I discuss Americans hating Americans, I will also provide some suggestions at the end of this book, offering ways, ideas, recommendations to help Americans deal with hatred among themselves! Even though there will be a great deal about racism discussed in this book, there will also be some discussions regarding black-on-black crime and other issues related to African Americans.

As stated, the title of this book is Why Do Americans Hate Americans? I know this title will rattle a lot of cages, because people in general do not believe they have a spirit of hate or hatred. The word hate is a verb, and the word hatred is a noun. Hate is usually in the form of an activity or attitude, and hatred can be a perception, i.e. toward a certain group of people.

My purpose of writing this book and choosing this topic is to encourage our society to address this social disease and work toward finding a solution. Moreover, my intention is to provide American people something practical and meaningful to use in their lives. It is my belief that hate is predicated on racism, which I believe is a social disease. Admittedly, there are different definitions of racism. Regardless, racism is primarily based on economics, oppression, and race. For instance, there was a class-action lawsuit filed against a major restaurant chain by the federal government years ago. Reportedly, this restaurant chain had some illegal practices of serving African American customers and not hiring them as restaurant managers or corporate personnel. When an organization or person has economic power to oppress a certain race of people, based on their race, this is racism. I know some people tend to confuse racism with prejudice or discrimination. But discrimination is based on prejudice; prejudice is prejudging without the facts. Period. Discrimination is choosing to differentiate a certain group of people based on their appearance, ethnicity, religion, customs, socioeconomic status (SES), level of education or a lack thereof, language, just to mention a few.

Why do Americans hate Americans? Actually, this is a rhetorical question, meaning that no one has a real answer to this question, and no one really knows why. Of course, we can speculate or assume, but I do not believe this question can be completely answered. Could it be fear? Could it be hatred? Could it be jealousy? Could it be ignorance? Or could it be just human behavior. Any one of the above can be a plausible answer, but it may not be the answer. As America has become more diverse, people tend to misbehave. Furthermore, it seems that the more diverse we are the more divided America has become. For instance, when a community has been predominantly one race for years and years and other people move into the community, racism rears its ugly head. In some cases, there is the “white flight”. The white flight is a term that is often used, to describe non-minorities leaving their community when African Americans move in. When this group of people move out of the neighborhood, property value depreciates, businesses move out, redlining starts, services decline and

hate crime increases, as well as poverty occurs. I can recall when my family and I moved into a predominantly Italian American community on the far South Side of Chicago in 1969, we experienced the white flight syndrome. I use the word syndrome, because it includes characteristics related to various human behavior. For instance, some people become fearful of other people who are different from them. Some people become violent, because they feel intimidated and/or threatened. Some people may become biased and prejudiced toward minorities, because they do not understand their cultures, lifestyles, customs, clothes, music, languages, etc. Some people just do not like people who are different from themselves. Period. Schools used to be a haven for children in America. We did not have so much violence in schools as we see today. Children would be able to attend school without being concerned about being injured and/or killed. Now, schools across our nation are rampant with school violence and/or school shootings. I can recall the very first time I personally experienced and witnessed school violence. I was in the eighth grade, returning from lunch and waiting to be allowed inside the school building. (The grade school I attended at the time was located in the "Disciples territory," but predominantly "Black Stone Rangers" attended the school). This school was totally hell! Every day I would have to fight gang members from both sides, in order to attend school and leave to go home from school. This one particular day was quite unusual: While I and other students were waiting to be let in the school building, returning from lunch, some of the students were shouting out gang slogans when they recognized their rival gang was walking by, not driving by. The rival gang members opened fire on us. I heard bullets ricocheting off the school building, inches over my head. The Chicago police officer, who was assigned to provide safety and security to my school (James Wadsworth Elementary), returned gunfire. I could not believe what my ears were hearing. I was just a few feet from the officer as he exchanged gunfire with the Disciple gang members.

Based on my personal experiences and years living in America, I strongly believe racism is a social disease. Now, what do I mean by this? First, there are different types of diseases. There are medical diseases such as cancer, diabetes, hypertension, etc. There are mental health diseases or mental disorders such as schizophrenia, bipolar (bipolar 1 and bipolar 2), personality disorders (narcissistic, histrionic, borderline, antisocial, just to name a few). And there are social diseases such as poverty, black-on-black crime, discrimination, bigotry, hate crime and racism. (In fact, I believe there are hundreds of social diseases, but I will not get into that right now. That would require another book to write). Secondly, diseases are incurable, but are treatable. Unfortunately, there are no cures for diseases. They can only be treated, with the most efficacious, effective and antidote methods. We know that most medical diseases are primarily treated with medication and some in cases with surgery. On the other hand, mental disorders are typically treated with psychotherapy, therapy and psychological testing, with the exception of severe psychopathology, e.g. major depression, schizophrenia, or bipolar. These mental disorders often require psychotropics, because of the chemical imbalance in the brain. Oftentimes, dopamine and/or serotonin are implicated. Social diseases are a different story. However, I believe they can be treated with a different mindset--- a change of heart, genuine love, patience, caring, compassion and sensitivity. In order to treat racism in our society, we need to have a different mindset about people in general. We need to reconsider, treating all people the same way we want to be treated. We need to have genuine love, patience and caring toward each other. In addition, we need to be compassionate and show sensitivity toward each other. Of course, it may not be easy to do all these things, but we need to try different ways and change our attitudes about racism in America.

Talking about or discussing racism in the United States of America is perhaps the most avoided social issue in this country, because it creates high emotions, harsh feelings, resentment, bitterness, defensiveness and anger. There is a lot of blame. Many African Americans blame racism on non-African Americans, and some non-African Americans do not believe it is their fault for racism in this country. Hence, we are at an impasse. As I stated earlier, I believe racism is a social disease, one that has infected our country since its existence, as well as the beginning of the creation of the universe. I do not believe people are born as racists. Racism can be environmental, i.e. that it can be taught and/or learned in one's environment, e.g. in one's immediate family or circle of friends. No one likes to be blamed for something for which he or she is not responsible. I do not believe blaming is going to fix the problem, neither will making people feel responsible for something that they do not have any control over.

What can Americans do about racism in America? For starters, we can start with prevention, education, intervention, rehabilitation and justice. Each one of these deserves some elaboration. Preventing the social disease of racism is more than a notion. It needs to be a priority for all Americans. In order to eradicate racism in this country, we need to start valuing each other as human beings and provide the utmost respect, love, compassion for all. Perhaps this may seem easier said than done. However, I strongly believe this can be done through the following suggestions:

- Whenever you have the opportunity or occasion to encounter a person whose race, gender, creed, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, customs differ from yours, invite her or him out for a cup of coffee or tea. Try to develop a friendly or platonic relationship. (Remember you are not asking for a date. You just want to get to know the person as a human being). Period!
- Try to interact with another person who is completely different from you. For instance, if you are African American or Irish American, try to have a conversation about current events or your personal goals in life. Preferably, use this opportunity on your job or in your neighborhood. At the beginning of the conversation, make it light and general.
- While you are in the public, greet others by saying “hello”. If possible, wish the person a wonderful day or evening. Sometimes a nod may be a good gesture, too. The intent here is just acknowledging people in your presence. In general, people like to be acknowledged and recognized.
- Do not make generalizations about people. Some people have a tendency to generalize and put certain people in categories for various reasons. Remember, people are not monolithic! This includes everyone from all walks of life and other countries!
- When you are in stores, restaurants or in public buildings, hold the door open for the person who is behind you. If there is a revolving door, offer the person to go first through the door. I have been doing this for years, and I am so amazed how reciprocal people have been with this small, friendly gesture.
- During the winter holiday seasons, some people are generally in the spirit of giving, caring, serving, etc. Why not make this a lifestyle? Let people know you care about them. There are many ways to help people besides giving money. Giving a few minutes of your time to listen is invaluable and priceless. You will be so surprised to find so many people who are in need of a listening ear. There are so many people who are in despair and distress.
- Some universities and high schools have made it mandatory for their students to volunteer their time to do community services. Volunteering in your community shows that you care and concerned about humankind. You can do mentorship or provide tutorial services to your local schools to students who need extra help in their subjects. Historically, Americans have been great volunteers.
- We all are spiritual beings. Our spirituality is often ignored and/or neglected. I am not necessarily talking about religion or Christianity. I am talking about being who you are and living out your purpose(s) in life. One of our purposes in life is to love. We can choose to love or hate. The choice is yours!
- Educating people about people is vital and essential. People need to know about each other’s belief systems, customs, values, religion, music, foods, rituals, etc. As Americans, we should not be reluctant or hesitant to explore other Americans’ lifestyles. America is a very diverse country, with people from social, economic and ethnic groups. Education starts at home. Parents need to educate their children and themselves about other Americans whose family structures differ from theirs. There is so much information on the Internet regarding the world, as well as in books and magazines. When you are educated about people who are different from yourself, you will have a better understanding and perspective about people in general. Because we are Americans and live in Amer-

ica does not preclude us from having an appreciation for people. Furthermore, just because you are American does not mean you know about America. Americans are not monolithic. For example, Puerto Rican Americans are different from Mexican Americans, and Mexican Americans are different from Cuban Americans. Irish Americans are different from Italian Americans and German Americans. Chinese Americans are different from Japanese Americans and Japanese Americans are different from Korean Americans. Do you get the picture? Moreover, all African Americans are not the same or monolithic. Even in different parts of America, African Americans have different lifestyles, customs, belief systems and heritage. Hence, all African Americans are not the same or have the same lifestyle. I know the media tend to bend all African Americans in one group, but this is an unfortunate mistake, which causes misconceptions, stereotypes, prejudice and racism.

- Intervention may be necessary in some cases. Of course, there are people who are not interested in learning about other people or do not want to get along with certain Americans. Unfortunately, there will be Americans who will not behave themselves. Because of this, there will be times where intervention will be necessary, meaning that bad behavior needs to be addressed accordingly and people need to be held accountable for their inappropriate behavior. As I mentioned earlier in this book about the hate crime law, which I find repulsive and un-American, but it is necessary. When some Americans behave badly toward other Americans, there may be a time that the law enforcement may be necessary, especially when people have been bodily injured or treated unfairly. It would be great, if we didn't need a hate crime law or any other laws to protect Americans against Americans. I have had numerous conversations with non-minorities about this matter. Many of them believe that it is unfair to have such a law. Furthermore, they do not believe society should be held responsible for what took place decades ago, during an era when they did not exist. Moreover, they believe that they should not be held accountable for the racism and discrimination that their ancestors caused in this country. To some extent, I somewhat agree. However, when I ask these individuals what they have done about racism and discrimination that have been perpetuating since then and currently, I often get a blank stare. What is so intriguing about the hate crime law is that it did not exist prior to the Jim Crow laws or the Civil Rights Movement. I would be completely naïve to believe that the hate crime law would had a chance to exist during these eras. However, what bothers me immensely is that our society has not made that much progress with racial relations and human rights for all Americans. Period! Apparently, some Americans have not done their part in making America a better country for all Americans. Ideally, it would be great if we did not need laws to protect Americans against Americans or the hate crime law in America. Until we can do a better job as a country, we may need to continue to have laws to protect Americans against Americans.
- Rehabilitation may be necessary in some instances. Rehabilitation is often associated with prisoners who have been incarcerated and/or rehabilitated prior to being released from prison. I am using this term differently: In reference to ways to address racism in America, rehabilitating the minds of people would be a form of rehabilitation. For instance, restructuring and reshaping the way people think about each other would be a form of rehabilitation.
- Justice for all is something that is missing from our society. Of course, our Constitution stipulates this, but it is often not a reality in the day-to-day world. In light of this, Americans do not need laws, rules and regulations to govern their behavior, morals and character. Again, this is an issue about treating people the same way you want to be treated. In essence, putting yourself in another person's shoes would be ideal. When I was a forensic psychologist, there was immense emphasis placed on evidence-based practice. What this means is that the practice of psychology should be based on scientific evidence of research and methodology related to the delivery of mental health services provided to patients who were experiencing mental illness or mental disorders. Of course, there are different standards and/or criteria of evidence-based practice in the health care profession. Each profession has its own scientific criteria of evidence-based practice. What is my point?

Since I suggested that racism is a social disease, it would need its own evidence-based practice. However, I have not used any scientific research to support my standards of evidence-based practice. In spite of this, I am providing my own evidence-based practice related to racism in America. 1). Treating racism holistically, not in fragments. 2). Adapting effective methods and ways to eradicate racism in America. 3). Holding Americans accountable for the future of this country. 4). Preparing future generations to continue to combat racism. 5). Training multicultural professionals to provide education and prevention of racism. 6). Working collectively and collaboratively as Americans. 7). Assuring action plans take precedence over laws, policies and legislations. 8). Redefining multiculturalism as it relates to racism. 9). Educating Americans about racism, as well as working toward common goals to eradicate it. 10). Americanizing Americans to become Americans. 11). Redefining America for the future.

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