

4 BROWN PENNIES: THE TRUTH BEHIND SYSTEMIC RACISM AND SOCIAL INJUSTICE IN AMERICA

Introduction

The white owner of “Shockley’s”, a neighborhood convenience store in a predominantly black community on the west-side of town, stares with an air of disdain at 4 brown pennies placed on the counter as payment by a little black boy. He continues to stare as the little black boy digs out the rest of his change to satisfy the price tag of 30¢ attached to his bubblegum of choice.



Neither the boy nor the store owner can quite put their finger on it, but both consciously accept the roles that their surrounding environment and society have given them to play. In a fraction of a second, the 4 brown pennies on the counter confirm certain ‘truths’ pursuant to these roles: The penny is diverse from all the other coins that are accepted as payment. Of all the other coins, the penny is the only brown coin, and it takes a whole lot of pennies to equate to ‘one’ of the other coins. On its front side, the penny memorializes the face of the guy who essentially freed the slaves in America; and THEREFORE this act of memorialization, in the minds of its countrymen, is unconsciously granted the value of... a penny.

The boy takes the remaining change from his pocket and organizes the coins onto the counter into discriminatory groups, in order to help with his arithmetic. Finally he takes up the 30¢ he counted and hands it to the store owner. Again, neither the boy nor the store owner can quite put their finger on it, but something happens mentally. The transaction of 30¢ for bubblegum has become a mutual acknowledgement that the boy is symbolized by the pennies involved; in a society where other higher-valued, more privileged designations are comfortable seeing themselves as having to tolerate his existence.

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Systemic Racism in America

The following is an excerpt from Willie Lynch Letter of 1712.

In my bag here, I have a foolproof method for controlling your black slaves. I guarantee every one of you that if installed correctly it will control the slaves for at least 300 years [which from the time of this letter would be the year 2012].

In an anonymous quote from a high-ranking government official, he states “the bigger the lie, the more likely people will believe it”. What are the odds that one of the coins produced as official tender for currency of the country would have special properties that just-so-happened to earmark specific ideas that perpetuate the subjugation of a specific group of people in America? What are the odds that the method of choice in the production of coins was not to manufacture all coin types in the same manner, but rather to reserve specialty-type manufacturing for a coin tendering the least-valued currency?

Our opening anecdotal story is an illustration of the active use of one primary key to fueling systemic racism in America today: indoctrination. While indoctrination itself is actually inherently neutral, its use, particularly in America, has historically been employed on a large scale with extreme prejudice. Calculated methods are used to covertly and strategically saturate the general public with a specific point of view. Many people would deem an average Hollywood film, television commercial, or PBS special program as unassuming and harmless; while others with a more discerning eye would deem many of them as clear and blatant propaganda.

The idea of indoctrination gives those with malicious intent an excellent opportunity to quietly ‘steer’ the general population to serve their special interests. While indoctrination can and should be used for the benefit of society, more times than not, America has intentionally used it to systemically frame race relations; creating irrational bias out of traits or properties (i.e. color) that are otherwise intrinsically neutral.

For example, does it rationally follow that the color ‘black’ be inherently evil while the color ‘white’ be inherently good? Why does the term ‘black death’ represent the bubonic plague, while ‘white knight’ represents a valiant warrior? Why are demons

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often depicted in films and art as black, while angels are depicted as white? Why is 'blackmail' a term for threatening someone; while our nation's president lives in The White House? Why in children's fables, was 'the ugly duckling' black, while 'Mary had a little lamb whose fleece was white as snow'? Why does the term 'black sheep' represent someone who is rejected, while telling a 'little white lie' is seen as innocent? Why is the highly intelligent, community-oriented and fearless black sea-dwelling mammal called the 'Killer Whale'; while the most notable and dangerous sea-dwelling animal, routinely depicted as a man-eating predator called the 'Great White Shark'? And as from the standpoint of a penny, why does the color 'brown' carry the obligation of holding the least value?

What these examples reveal is the system behind racism in America. Racism is more than surface mistreatment or offensive slurs. It is more than the collateral damage handed down through America's original sin. It is a consciously up-kept, deliberately perpetuated, and fine-tuned system that has proven and continues to prove very effective. Even the term 'Systemic Racism' itself is proof that the system works and is in full affect; in that it has been reduced to a mere buzz word amidst the commotion of the political arena and passed off as cliché or trivial in mainstream media; losing its true meaning.

The unfortunate truth is, in order to function in this society, you are required to be a witting, or preferably unwitting cog in the machine of systemic racism.

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The African American

What is an African American? The term 'African American' emerged from the Civil Rights Movement as an attempt for minorities (namely the decedents of slaves) to legitimately lay claim to equal treatment and rights in a majority white society. But while many believe the term 'African American' to be one of the Civil Rights Movement's greatest milestones, it is in fact its greatest concession. The person carrying that label must renounce their original nationality (whatever that may be), and assume a posture with their head down and their hand-out to receive validation and acceptance into the nationality of their white counterparts as 'American'.

The Constitution of the United States of America specifies explicitly that a citizen of the country is sovereign. The Constitution deems all sovereign men the privilege of being "created equal". In addition, the Constitution grants all sovereign men the full backing of the sovereign nation of which he or she is a citizen. And accordingly, the right of sovereignty is recognized internationally. That is, because the country is said to be sovereign, any attack on a citizen of the sovereign nation by another nation is essentially a direct attack on the sovereign nation itself.

But how does one originally from another country become a citizen? Better yet, how does one obtain sovereignty as a citizen of this country? The answer is the 'will' of the individual. It was the intention of the founding fathers of this country to place the blessings and responsibilities of sovereignty solely on the immigrant's will to become a citizen. Basically, it is the **will** of the immigrant to renounce the citizenship of his or her country of origin and join themselves to become citizens of this country. And accordingly, their generations subsequently born in this country, becoming citizens through birth, were conferred the same 'will' of their immigrant parents.

But this begs the question: Was it the **will** of the slaves that were brought to this country 400 years ago to become citizens? The answer is an obvious **no**. It was not the will of the slaves to be here at all; much less become citizens. It was the will of others that they be brought here as slaves. So how can an African American legitimately lay claim to the right of sovereignty? Remember, in the eyes of this country's founding fathers, sovereignty through citizenship is an indication of the **will** of the immigrant to join this nation.

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Have you ever thought to yourself how arrogantly Nigerians conduct themselves as visitors of this country? The reality is quite the contrary. What we might perceive as arrogance is actually dignity. It is natural, even proper for people who have a self-awareness of their nationality to emit its intrinsic dignity. Have you ever wondered why exclusively Chinese communities exist in the U.S. like China Town, or why exclusively Mexican communities exist in the U.S. like those near the Mexican border? Again, it is natural, even proper for immigrants being citizens of the U.S. to retain the richness of their culture and heritage in their communities. But what about the descendants of slaves? What can so-called 'African Americans' emit with an intrinsic sense of dignity in their nationality beyond slavery? What richness of culture can they retain based on their heritage beyond some vague notion that their ancestors originated as primitive, barefoot grass-hut dwellers from some jungle in Africa?

The unfortunate truth is the descendants of slaves have been stripped of their true nationality and identity. Remember, slaves are considered to be the property of their owners. Rationally speaking, they have as much claim to their nationality of origin as a dog has claim to its nationality of origin. Slaves, by definition, are not immigrants; that is, they did not join themselves to this country on the basis of their own free will. Therefore, as stipulated through the intentions of this country's founding fathers, the descendants of slaves, or so-called 'African Americans', **have no legitimate claim** to the sovereignty of citizenship guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States of America.

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The Remedy

It is high time for so-called 'African Americans' to look beyond accepting a superficial second-hand version of acceptance and investigate their true heritage. If their heritage is unknown, perhaps the reason is more involved than mere cause-and-effect of being a descendent of a slave. Perhaps it's more sinister than what would be characterized as a surface side-effect. Perhaps it's a worthwhile pursuit to find out.

There is more to so-called 'African Americans' than being descendants of slaves. The person constitutes a regal, sovereign identity backed by a legitimately sovereign nation that commands more credibility than some vague notion of originating from somewhere in Africa. The need to be validated and accepted by the house of one's subjugation as qualifying for equal rights as citizens should itself be an insult. Validation should be a trait of identity; not the other way around. The understanding of your intrinsic value should drive you to seek out your true heritage.

LET IT DRIVE YOU.