

## Dr. P's Jali Tyme Story

I ain't one to talk, so you ain't heard this from me. But, you can't fix what you refuse to acknowledge. The art of dialog refers to the knowledge and skills that enable us to recognize and redress conditions that deny some access to opportunities and afford others an illusion of privilege based on ascribed/subscribed identity. Too often, dialog about race and race matters is devoid of even basic historical understandings. Race is a modern idea - it hasn't always been with us. In ancient times, language, religion, status, and class distinctions were more important than physical appearance. There is no question that individual human beings are different, one from the other. Our eyes confirm this day in and day out: skin color, body shape, hair form, eye shape. For several hundred years we have used these visual differences to classify people into four or five groups we call races.

We have a notion of race as being divisions among people that are deep, that are essential that are somehow biological or even genetic, and that are unchanging - that these are clear cut distinct categories of people. The idea of race assumes that simple external differences, rooted in biology, are linked to other, more complex internal differences. Like athletic ability, musical aptitude, intelligence. This belief is based on the idea that race is biologically real. The idea of race as biology is ferociously persistent on America of the United States' playing fields. To understand why the idea of race is a biological myth requires a major paradigm shift, an absolute paradigm shift, a shift in perspective. And for me, it is like seeing, you know, what it must have been like to understand that the world is not flat. You climb to the top of a mountain, hill, or precipice, look out over the horizon, and see what was thought of as flat seems to curve a bit. The fact that race is not based on biology, but an idea ascribed to biology is where the paradigm shifts. And the beauty of the race business is that you can identify people by just looking at them. You don't even have to look at their genes because one manifestation of their genes is there - namely skin color or eye shape or hair texture/shape - and that becomes the key to everything.

Ideas and definitions of race have changed over time, depending on social and political climate. Historically, racial categories were not neutral or objective. Groups were differentiated so they could be excluded or disadvantaged, often in explicit ways. For example, in the early 20th century, U.S. courts decided who was legally white and who was not for the purposes of naturalized citizenship. The courts did this in arbitrarily and sometimes in contradictory ways. The term white became the key signature for a person to be classified American and any/everybody/thing else was excluded from that membership.

What we have is a substantial number of ethnic groups who bask in the commonality of their melanin deficient skin, who shield themselves under the rubric of the word white, while pretending to be superior, privileged, and a Race unto themselves. What a farce. People hiding under the manufactured umbrella, "white" to compensate for their deficiencies. You can only manifest white if you ascribe some constructed label that is the polar/physical opposite of the constructed definition white label to other entities. Science does not support the subscriptions of black, red, yellow, or white as valid race categories nor do these labels qualify as true skin colors. These so called "white" people are simply generational offspring of people who arrived as immigrants, refugees, disenfranchise asylum seeking populations who have grown up just like everybody else immersed in a xenophobic, sexist, homophobic,

and racist society, it is all in the air that we breathe. What we must remember is that while our current human species may not be directly responsible for creating this Socially Constructed Reality, we are responsible for what we choose to do with that legacy today.

All our genetic research is telling us we cannot find any genetic markers that are in everybody of a particular group and in nobody of some other group in this species called the Human Race. There is not one gene, trait, or characteristic that distinguishes all members of one group from all members of another. We can map any number of traits, and none would match our idea of a black, red, yellow, or white ascription of a valid and separate race. This is because modern humans have not been around long enough to evolve into different subspecies and we have always moved, mated, and mixed our genes. Beneath the phenotypical shell, we are one of the most genetically similar of all species. The measured amount of genetic variation in the human population is extremely small. And that is something that people need to wrap themselves around. In fact, genetically, we are among the most similar of all species. Among the many who challenge "racial science," It has been said there is not one, single, physical feature, including skin color, which all our human populations have in common which would identify them as a race different from the human race. We can see differences among populations, but can populations be bundled into what we call races? How many races would there be? Five? Fifty-five? Who decides? And how different would they really be from one another?

Think about race in its universality. Where is your measurement device? There is no way to measure race. We sometimes do it by skin color, other people may do it by hair texture - other people may have the dividing lines different in terms of skin color. What is black in America of the United States is not what's black in India or what's black in Mali, Senegal, Brazil. Race as biology simply doesn't work, but what is important is that race is a very salient social and historical construct, a social and historical idea. We live in racial smog. Under the skin, we really are effectively the same. And we get fooled because some of the visual differences are quite noticeable.

We must open our eyes to the way unconscious bias is rooted in historical racial constructs that are continually reified in America of the United States' culture. We must come to terms with the knowledge that white dominant culture is deeply embedded into all of our behaviors, people we call "colored" included. As a result, it is embedded into all our institutions and social systems. How do you fix what you refuse to acknowledge? How do we re-design systems free of inequitable and unjust practices of our past? How can we develop our equity lens to better identify when our inequitable and unjust practices unconsciously raise its ugly head? We must decrease the high level of disparities we are all witnessing in the systems where we coningle? We are all living under this socially constructed reality called "white dominant culture." A system that could work for all if the greedy people clinging to the concept "white" would conduct a reality check. White is not a person, white isn't a place, white isn't a country, white isn't even where you have a know exactly what to do partner/spouse, two forever happy children, nice house, a Tesla car and grass for the children to cut so they can earn some big white spending money. White is a socially constructed, narcissistic, delusional state of grandeur, a concocted concept baited to allure. To move forward we have to be able to see just how shallow and superficial the average differences are within the human race even though in certain features like skin color and hair form the visual differences are fairly striking. They're based on almost nothing in terms of overall genetic variation. Human being's outward appearances are evident by way of their phenotypical manifestation. But we attach meanings and construct assumptions, even laws, that create enduring social disparities.

Race is a human invention. We created it, we have used it in ways that have been in many, many respects quite negative and quite harmful. And we can create ourselves out of it. We made it, we can unmake it. The racialized society we live in has been under construction for many centuries. How can we unmake race unless we first confront its enormity as a historical and social reality, and its emptiness as biology? As people who subscribe to the construct of white and privileged, this deepened understanding can inform the work you do and thus aid in the desired transformative culture where equity is central to life and the institutions in which we coningle.

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