

As a white musician who benefits from being white in America, I feel it's my responsibility to share some thoughts while people are taking to the streets in protest of police brutality against Black people. The problem of police brutality— manifested in the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and so many more— is rooted in the systemic racism that permeates our way of life in this country. Chicago is one of the most segregated cities in the U.S., a fact that we have chosen to perhaps frown at, but accept. Police-driven violence in Chicago against Black and Brown folks is also a fact that we accept too readily.

White people, including myself, have to approach the nationwide conversation on race with the assumption that the way we see the world is clouded by the racial bias which is woven into our upbringing, and that our perspective on reality and on life in this country is not the complete picture. It is so, so hard to not feel defensive when someone is challenging the narrative you write in your own head, about your own life, the one that reads, "I am a good person who isn't racist." You can strive to be a good person, and also acknowledge that you, as a white person in America, may be (probably are) perpetuating racism in one way or another. This is imperative if we are each going to truly align with our own internal narrative of being "a good person" and take the responsibility of educating ourselves on our role in the United States' racist history.

A lot of us are feeling uncomfortable right now. This discomfort can include a range of emotions, from full-blown rage at law enforcement, government, and our peers who don't understand the necessity of these protests; to helplessness in the face of a deeply-rooted, insidious part of the American cultural identity; to fear that the ways in which this country handles issues of race will never improve. I, personally, have been feeling all of these things, and I'm doing my best to sit with these feelings and, instead of letting them overwhelm me, embrace them as being part of a process of sharing (in a small way) the emotional and psychological burden put on Black people. They have been in a state of siege and crisis since the moment they entered this country as enslaved people, basically without relief or let-up. They are *fighting for their lives*. White people have to do a better job not only of fighting with them, but also of examining the poisonous racial bias that lives within us and may be holding us back from engaging in that fight with real efficacy.

I'm sure that I have done things or said things that I wasn't even aware were hurtful to Black people in my life, and it fills me a terrible sense of shame. I want to do better, and I need to. This is not the time to hide from our shame, but to confront it, and take the first hard steps toward real change in our hearts and our society. I'm doing my best, and so should you.

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