**Racism Is Everyone’s Battle**

By Damian Okrasinski

**I was appalled at the words I heard that chilly morning**

It was another standard day bringing my little brother, Reggie, to the bus stop. I wasn’t enthusiastic about waking up at 6 in the morning, but he needed someone to walk him to the front of our trailer park safely. It was an extremely crisp morning as I could feel my face freeze with the frigid air. As I heard the bus pull up to the entrance and I sent Reggie off, I made out something that would baffle me for days to come.

“Push that little brown kid out of your way. Get on that bus first.”

Being in a predominately white area, there was no other kid this could refer to. Reggie is a mixed child, being one half African American and half white. I was absolutely infuriated with what I heard. I looked at the source of the sound. A father talking to his child. Was anyone else in the area hearing this? As I watched the kids get on the bus, Reggie got slightly pushed aside, but was ultimately unphased, not realizing the circumstances and moving on. I gazed at the man with the fury of one thousand suns before I started to walk away. All taste in my mouth went sour and the cold I was feeling was blocked out by the rage I felt. The amount of anger that all encompassed at the afterthought was agonizing. I went home and informed my mother about what happened, and we worked an alternative bussing plan out with the school district.

Reggie, in all technicality, isn’t my full brother. He’s technically only a half-brother, sharing our mom while our fathers are different people. This hasn’t stopped me from being as close to Reggie as heat to fire. Ever since the day I was there for his birth and I was the one who cut his umbilical cord, we’ve had an unbreakable bond that hasn’t waned since that day. I’ve bought him school supplies, video game consoles, and toys for him all at the age of 19. We are also different races, me being completely Caucasian while Reggie is mixed. This has caused some genuine confusion among people who don’t really know my family, but nothing hateful until that morning. I had an epiphany that day, that I would stand up to any injustice I saw, and I would do it like it was my own brother being prejudiced against.

In our society, some would stand idly by, being a bystander to these injustices, and not have any concern with this. I beg to differ, arguing that no matter the type, source, or victim of injustice, it is everyone’s obligation to stand against these injustices in any way they feasibly can.

According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the US government agency that keeps a solid record of all data of all crimes in the US, reported that in 2018 alone roughly 7000 incidents of single-bias hate crime were committed with about 60% of these crimes being based on race. 85% of these offenders were also over the age of 18. This means nearly 3600 adults committed a crime against another human based on their skin color alone. Imagine someone who was 27, going up and beating up a child like my brother Reggie for no reason other than the color of his skin. This number also only correlates to cases that were reported and accounted for. Imagine how many cases go unreported because the victim is too afraid to speak up and the bystanders around them were also too afraid, or just plainly didn’t care about the injustice occurring in front of their very eyes. Statista, a company that used FBI statistics to gather information and who takes that information to make the data comprehensible, found that the most targeted group of people is African Americans, the most likely place for the crime to occur was at the victim's residence, and that from 2000 to 2016, the number of white supremacist fatalities was 49. This is an extremely high number given the circumstance. Another horrible fact is that most hate crimes occur at the victims’ home, where they are supposed to feel safe and protected. Now, these crimes apply to citizens of the US but what of the police force. As of recent, the police have been a recipient of scrutiny, with the death of George Floyd, police everywhere are being cracked down on the police brutality against minorities. According to the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, which is a group that takes research from biological, physical, and social sciences and ensures sincerity in the research reported out of 100,000 African Americans, nearly 100 of those will die to police brutality. That isn't 100,000 criminals, that is 100,000 American citizens that all must live in fear that maybe they’ll be the next statistic. They will be part of the 100 that are the unfortunate victim of prejudice. This poses the question, who can you trust if not the people meant to enforce laws that protect you.

I’ve gathered these statistics, numbers, and figures to heavily prove my point. Racism is not dead nor irrelevant today. We as a people must stand against these injustices wherever and whenever we see them. These atrocities happen every day to ordinary people and not just people, but mothers, fathers, brothers, and sisters. I implore you to go out and do whatever you can to stand up against injustice wherever you see it. Don’t allow yourself or other people to be a bystander or an onlooker to these injustices. Stand up in whatever way you can and make a difference. Even if only 10% of the American population stands up, that’s still about 30 million people fighting against these problems. I personally would stand up for my fellow man like they were my family, would you?

*Damian Okrasinski is an aspiring game development student working towards his undergraduate degree. He lives with his mother and his younger brother while not on campus, and does his best to support his small family.*

Sources

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