Mixed Fragility

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June 5, 2020 By Megan-Claire Chase

I feel like I've been hit on the head, but instead of being knocked out, it has woken me up. I've been uncomfortable being vocal about the racism I see and have experienced. Yet, I must push through it and not remain silent. You might be wondering why I feel uncomfortable. Well, I've finally been able to put it into words for you.

According to Dictionary.com, white fragility means the tendency among members of the dominant white cultural group to have a defensive, wounded, angry, or dismissive response to evidence of racism. This term is still new to me, but it is dead on.The more vocal I become about racism, the more I see this white fragility in some of the people I know in real life and those online who I only know on the surface.

Yet, I am struggling with what I call my own mixed fragility. I made up this term because it seems to fit my situation. This mixed fragility is my own tendency to be defensive, wounded, angry, or dismissive of the black community due to my own self-hate of not wanting to be associated with all that it means to be black in this country because it would cut me off from being accepted in the white community.

Whew. It was extremely difficult to not only acknowledge this but put it into words.

I'm sure a number of white friends who actually KNOW me are wondering why I have all this anger lately, and being so vocal about being black when I've never uttered a word of authentic support about the black community in the past. And you know what? I feel sick about it.

Let me share MY history of growing up in Macon, GA. I come from an educated family on my mother's side where both grandparents were college graduates. My parents were married for 9 1/2 years before they divorced. Both are college graduates with master's degrees and my mother has two Ph.D.'s. I was raised Catholic. I was often the only black person in my classes at St. Joseph's Catholic School until I got older, then I was one of three. My mother and I were often the only black people to attend St. Joseph's Catholic Church. I took ballet. I was heavily involved in community theatre where again I was often the only black person in the cast.

Courtesy Megan-Claire Chase

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I did not have a lot of black influence growing up outside of my family. When the black kids I would meet while at summer camps would tease me for acting “too white” and for being a “sellout,” you can bet I felt anger and resentment. I wasn’t trying to be anything other than myself during those supremely awkward years. My mixed fragility would think why are these black people making fun of me for doing what I enjoy doing, and reading Anne of Green Gables, and for being naturally dramatic? The constant “you talk white” comments that plague me to this day hurt. I was

immediately judged, so I judged back. Both parties were wrong.

I would feel such hostility by certain black kids (not all) in high school and the few I encountered in college in upstate NY. Those who went to Mount de Sales Academy should know of the people I'm referencing. Back then I would often think, "aren't we at the same private Catholic high school?"

Courtesy Megan-Claire Chase

I was the only black cheerleader at The College of Saint Rose in my sophomore year. I would hear some of the black kids jeering at me from the benches saying, "quit acting white" and "cheerleading is for white girls." I heard those comments at every blasted basketball game for that season and refused to be on the team the next year because it was so hurtful. I can only paste a smile on my face for so long.

Courtesy Megan-Claire Chase

The constant feeling of ‘you’re not one of us’ has followed me like a dark shadow. How can I love myself when those who look like me reject me? What’s wrong with being different, quirky, and extra? Why should I have to talk and dress a certain way to be accepted when that’s not how I grew up?

So, I naturally gravitated to the white community. I’ve always heard from a lot of white friends and acquaintances over the years that they don’t see my color. I honestly thought that was a good thing because in my warped mind I thought “good, they see me as white like them.” I would often feel so accepted until I wasn’t invited to some birthday parties or sleepovers because their parents didn’t allow blacks in their homes. A guy who had been my dance partner in multiple musicals at Macon Little Theatre wasn’t allowed to go to prom with me because his parents said, “it’s one thing to be on stage with a n***er, but quite another to be seen out in public with one.” I’ve been followed in stores like Old Navy and Pier One because I must appear threatening with a damn fascinator in my hair or a purse that matches my shoes.

As an adult, I still do not have a lot of black friends. I have met a lot of black people over the years and within the cancer community, but I only have two who I consider real friends. One is male and one is female. Why? I’m still made fun of for not knowing about certain things that are staples within the black community like trap music for instance. I had to look it up and still don’t quite get it. I didn’t grow up with it.

Once tRump conned his way into the White House, I really started to feel the effects of his bigotry instantly. He and his cronies have given a green light to come out from the shadows and be open with their hate for blacks, POC and LGBTQ. I started to feel more hostility from whites than from blacks now. You can read my original post from last summer It’s a Troubling World about the white woman with her son who was misbehaving pointing at me saying, “See this black woman? If you don’t be quiet, she will ram her cart into you.” I remember when I posted this on my social media, I

had so many white friends saying I should've said this and that to her. They just couldn't understand why I remained quiet. Well, let me cue in that unhinged racist Amy Cooper and how she falsely escalated and accused the black bird watcher Christian Cooper of attacking her. I hope now my white friends will understand that's why I kept quiet last year. I knew if I had said anything, that white woman could've called the police and falsely say I was threatening her and her kid. Only one person would've ended up in handcuffs or dead…me. The other white woman behind me in line witnessed the entire thing and said nothing. Nothing.

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Until next time,

Warrior Megsie

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