

#233 - Three Things to Continue Racial Peacemaking

Hi there! You're listening to The Lazy Genius Podcast! I'm Kendra Adachi, and I'm here to help you be a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don't. Today is episode 233 - Three Things to Continue Racial Peacemaking. I'd like to acknowledge something that might be obvious but is also very important for this episode. I'm a white woman. My experience as a person in North Carolina where I've lived my entire life is as a white woman. I'm married to a Japanese man and have three mixed-race kids, but the privilege that I have experienced and the system I live in benefits me. Even growing up poor, the system still benefited me because I was white. And as a white person, I will live the rest of my life unlearning, relearning, and doing my small part to contribute to the work of making this country more equitable and replacing harmful systems with more loving and just ones. And I think until people with privilege acknowledge that they have privilege, it'll take us longer to get there.

So when it comes to this episode, I will not speak any of these words as some kind of social or racial justice expert. In fact, I feel some nerves speaking into this at all *because* I'm not an expert. But I'm learning and want to keep learning, and based on the communication I've gotten from so many of you in recent months, you feel the same way.

First, I want to share a quick word about how this episode came to be. My team was talking about episode ideas, and Letoya, our Lazy Genius community manager and a Black woman, suggested that I do something about anti-racism. She observed that while there was a lot of important talk around this subject last spring after George Floyd was murdered, including from this very podcast, that it was less common to see white people speaking about this when there wasn't a big news story. And she's absolutely right. And even as I was processing the episode with Letoya, I said something like, "Yes, it's so important to talk about this when there isn't some sort of crisis happening you're right!" And she kindly and lovingly said, "Well, it's important to acknowledge that the Black community is always in crisis and that there are things that happen all the time that don't get reported in the news, so I'd be aware of that language." And again, she's absolutely right because of course she is. My perspective is limited because I am white, and I am learning all the time how to take part in this work in a way that honors the BIPOC experience.

One of the questions I've often had as a white person and that I've heard other white people say is "what do I do?" Sometimes it's said in a helpless way, because there's so much to be done, so many big rocks to move, that my tiny contribution can't possibly make a difference. And then sometimes "what do I do?" is said with zeal and initiative and put me on the front lines where are we going?! The first perspective, at least for me, keeps me from moving. We talk about starting small a lot around here, and so often it's the most annoying advice because small moves feel like they're not doing anything. We're not really going anywhere. Will following and engaging with more content by BIPOC creators really make a difference? That hesitancy sometimes morphs into stopping altogether. Then on the other side, the zeal can very quickly morph, again at least for me, into being a white savior. Teju Cole coined the phrase "white savior industrial complex" in 2012 on Twitter and then subsequently in an article written for The Atlantic

that I'll link in the show notes, but there's this idea that white people are the fixers. It is up to us to save BIPOC communities in a way that still benefits us. It makes us feel good. It gives us acclaim. We're doing a good thing. But the reality is that seeing white people as the ones who hold the key is a deeply harmful mindset, right? It perpetuates the idea of white supremacy and therefore the systems that uphold white supremacy, too. So all that to say, I'm a white woman who wants a better world. I'm a white woman who is confronting my own biases and contributions to an unjust culture. I'm a white woman who has a lot of people who listen to what I say, and when we're talking about laundry, the stakes are a lot lower than this. In this episode, there is a very high chance that I will say something that a BIPOC listener will find troubling, not because I intend to say something offensive but because I have seen how deeply imbedded my implicit bias is and how easy it is for me to perpetuate a harmful system with my words, even when I don't mean to. Intention, however, is less important to me. We say that Lazy Geniuses are a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don't? One thing that doesn't matter to me is protecting my intention. I can say something that hurts another person, and even if I didn't mean to hurt them, I still want to take responsibility for that. That happens with my kids all the time among each other or between me and one of them. Just because we didn't mean to hurt someone's feelings doesn't mean we're absolved. So I'm just saying that up front that I still feel like I'm walking on baby giraffe legs when I talk about racial and social justice and systemic racism because there is so much to learn, more than I'll be able to learn in my lifetime. But I want to do what I can with what I have to contribute to a more just world, despite the fear that I'll do it wrong or say something the wrong way. My intention matters to me, but if you who are listening are hurt by something I say, my intention is secondary to your interpretation. That's my posture in this. So today, I want to share with you three small things that have made a big difference in my own process that I'm asking you to do over the next few weeks.

The first thing is to do a diversity audit. I'd like to encourage all of us to look at our forms of entertainment - Instagram, television and movies, podcasts, books - and notice how diverse those categories are. I remember back in 2020, I was confronted with how white my Instagram feed was. Almost exclusively white people. At first, I felt performative, following Black and Brown creators "just because." But I had to tell myself that it wasn't just because. I wanted and needed more diversity in my feed. I wanted diversity to become my norm, not the exception. And after a year of experiencing a diverse feed that spans a variety of topics, I have become more aware of when there *isn't* diversity represented. Representation has become the norm because that's what I see most often, and that is a wonderful thing.

I feel a similar pull in my experience with television commercials. Now I notice when an ad is only white people. The other day, in fact, an ad came on for a wealth management company, and everyone was white. I asked Sam, my sixth grader, if he noticed anything about the commercial. He said, "They're all old?" Which wasn't wrong even though there were probably 50 year olds in there, and I'm only ten years from that but that's not the point. I pointed out that the commercial was all white people, and we talked about it. Not necessarily just that single commercial, but the concept. What if all wealth management commercials only had white

people in them? What message does that send to different viewers? It was a short but good conversation where we're paying attention to what is normalized.

There's a chance that our forms of entertainment could use an audit. What are you seeing and hearing, and is there diversity there? And this isn't about just following BIPOC creators who are teaching about social justice or inclusivity or peacemaking outright. Those follows are good and important. But also what about just BIPOC creators living life? Going on vacation? Making dinner? Teaching you about budgeting and home design and how to run a business?

There is an assumption in our culture that white people are smarter, that they know more, that they are the expert, that they are the fixers of things. And that is not only completely and inherently false but that thinking also perpetuates the hierarchical, inequitable system we're currently in. You might not realize that you have an implicit bias that white people are smarter than people of color, but I'm going to be completely honest and say that I did. I didn't even realize it was there until I did an Instagram diversity audit. Why on earth would I not follow more BIPOC creators? I honestly didn't know the answer. And after some thought, I realized that there was something invisible but very present in me that assumed I couldn't learn as much from people of color. And when I unearthed that implicit bias, I was horrified and angry at myself. I'm deeply embarrassed to say it now. But this is the kind of work we can do individually to contribute to change. We can confront these uncomfortable things we've grown up believing, even layers and layers beneath the surface that we don't even realize, and move in a different direction.

I'll be sharing a lot of favorite Instagram follows and authors and all the things on Instagram this week, so be sure you're following along @thelazygenius, but I know that one area where I desire greater diversity is in the podcasts I listen to. I just scrolled through my Overcast app which is how I listen to podcasts, and every single show on there is hosted by a white person. Now sometimes those white hosts have BIPOC guests, but wow. I don't want my podcast experience to be like that. I didn't even realize it was like that until I looked. So that's all I'm asking of you. Just look. Look at your Instagram feed, your podcast app, your Netflix queue, your bookshelf, and observe what you see. And then ask yourself why it's that way. And then seek diversity. Not just to be a good person or to say that you have a diverse feed but to engage in the stories and joy and experiences of BIPOC creators and communities, to experience the world in a different way, to see through someone else's eyes. Entertainment can very quickly become an echo chamber; in fact, that's how the system is built. That's what an algorithm is. You like this? How about this? And you get more of the same. So we have to be intentional about making sure what we consume is representative of the world around us, not just our own specific bubble. Plus it's more fun that way.

We'll be right back.

So that's the first thing. Do a diversity audit. The second thing is to read the book Dear White Peacemakers by Osheta Moore. Osheta is a Black woman who is a writer and speaker and a pastor, and she is doing the singularly difficult work of teaching and loving white people as they

learn and unlearn racial biases inherent in living in a culture of white supremacy. We hear a lot, and understandably so, that it is not the job of the BIPOC community to teach white people about racism. We can figure it out. We can do the work. And that is correct. But Osheta feels a call to speak to white peacemakers and be a companion as we do this work. I'm so deeply humbled by her heart.

This book, *Dear White Peacemakers: Dismantling Racism With Grit and Grace*, is structured around the Sermon on the Mount from the Bible. It's a sermon that Jesus preached early in his ministry on earth, and, if you might remember, it's a sermon I wanted to pay close attention to this year, the year that I turn 40. Who knew that Osheta would structure this important book around that sermon? She shares personal stories, asks hard questions, and answers some that are even harder. It's unlike any book on racism I've read, and I think it's an essential read for any white person who is wanting to do the kingdom work of bringing love, joy, and peace to a world in desperate need of it. I know that not everyone who listens to this podcast has the same worldview that I do, but as a Jesus-loving Christian who has had a hard time with the Christian church right now, Osheta's book is a balm. It's empowering, insightful, loving, honest, and smart, and I think it's an incredibly impactful small step you can take.

She writes this: "Anti-racism isn't a weekend project like cleaning the basement or hanging twinkle lights over your deck. Anti-racism is a deeply emotional and challenging undertaking. If you do not built up practices of inner shalom, you'll put expectations on the outcome of your work that will turn your peacemaking into peacekeeping." Such powerful words. She also says this: "The problem with building your peacemaking on what you're against and not what you're for is that you're always prepared for a fight and always looking for an enemy." In this book, Osheta teaches white people what to be for and how to be for it. If you haven't read it already, now is a great time.

And the third thing I'd invite you to do is to buy and read through "30 Days to Being Actively Anti-Racist on Social Media," a simple, impactful ebook created by Deidra Riggs. It does what it says; it's 30 days where she walks you through your social media presence and engagement and how you can more actively be anti-racist there. She helps you examine what you believe about social media, what you believe about what you post and what others post, she talks about Friday introductions, when to walk away, what it means to center yourself in posts about racial justice, and so much more. It's literally one short page a day. Sometimes the day is just a question to ask yourself. But Deidra gives us a path that answers that question "what do I do?!" And it's a path with very small, doable steps. Plus Deidra is a JEDI Coach which stands for justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion and is my favorite person to ask me super hard questions about race.

I recently watched an Instagram live with her and Pati Taylor where they talked about their experience as Black women, how they've lost friends from speaking out against racial injustice, how they've been mistreated in the church, how they spend so much time considering what they're going to say because the consequences are so great. And in that live, Deidra said this: "The reason I do it is because I love people. I want people to engage in this conversation. I

believe all of us are hurt by oppression in this country, the oppressor and the oppressed.” And I feel that in her posts and especially in this resource “30 Days to Being Actively Anti-Racist on Social Media.” She cares about this topic because she cares about people.

So the three things you can do now, this week, this month: first, do a diversity audit and examine all your areas of entertainment. Second, read *Dear White Peacemakers* by Osheta Moore. And three, spend 30 days with Deidra. I’ll put links to both Osheta and Deidra in the show notes, and like I said, I’ll share some favorite follows on Instagram this week.

This is worthy work, my friends, to honor the humanity in everyone and to make sure that humanity is reflected not just in our Instagram feeds but in our systems. In government and education, in the justice system and the grocery store, in our neighborhoods and churches. But until we do small things like ask ourselves why our Instagram feeds are so white, those big changes are going to happen a lot more slowly. So these are three simple things white people can do as we continue this lifelong work. And if you are BIPOC and listen to this podcast, I’m honored you’re here, and I invite you to share your experiences with me whenever you’d like to. You can DM me on Instagram @thelazygenius or you can send me an email at hello@thelazygeniuscollective.com. You are welcome here, you matter, and you are worth this work. Every single bit of it. So thank you for being part of this community.

And that’s it for today. Thanks everyone for listening and until next time be a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don’t. I’m Kendra, and I’ll see you next week!