

Reflection & Prayertime – The Look

June 14, 2021

<https://us.pg.com/talkaboutbias/>

A few questions about the video? What did you notice about it? What did you feel while watching it? What do you think could be different in the future?

I had a coworker years ago named Markham French. Markham was a young, very thin, fast-paced black man with an easy laughter and someone I enjoyed getting to know. Markham once shared with me that he often when coming up behind white a white woman would cross the street rather than walk up behind her, especially if the sidewalk or walkway was narrow and he couldn't give her a wide berth. Markham said he also was conscious to always extend his fingers out straight so that if the woman glanced at him quickly or out of the corner of her eye could easily see he held no weapons and that his hands were empty.

I asked him how often he ended up doing the street-crossing and he said daily if not several times a day and I asked him didn't this slow him down from where he was going (assuming that in at least some instances he had to cross back over the street to get to his destination). He said that it did slow him down a little but that it was worth it to increase his own sense of safety and to support the perception of safety of the woman. He said it was anxiety-producing to feel the angst of some white women as he walked quickly up behind them and it was better for him and possibly them for him to just go ahead and cross the street.

I told him that I was so sorry that he lived in this world of adjusting his pace, his posture, and his path when he was no threat to anyone around him. I hate that he lived with the weight of constant monitoring and readjustment to ensure his best effort to appear non-threatening. I hate to think about the stress this constant consciousness placed on him physically, mentally, and spiritually. I haven't seen him in years but I hope that he walks with greater ease and less street-crossing these days.

Shameka Sells-Moore, a graduate of Unity House and a contract therapist with VOA Mid-States wrote recently on May 31...Such a good day today. We all know my neighborhood is predominantly er...white. Lol. But man, one of our neighbors invited us over (I have the girls) and it was just a good time. [OBJ] of course we recognized each other's differences, but there was absolutely no disrespect. Just laughter and good conversation. Just neighbors trying to get to know me and my grandchildren. Food and drinks. There was no side eyeing. No micro aggressive statements or questions. Just humans enjoying other humans. When I was younger, this is what I wanted the world to be like. Of course, that's unheard of now. So, I'll just take my little neighborhood with belly laughs and children playing together without pause.

As we head toward the observance of Juneteenth this Saturday we are mindful of the lingering effects of not just personal instances involving racism but its embedding in systems that have had and continue to have long-term effects on black people and how if we are not involved in battling these structures, then we are involved in perpetuating them. We can fight racism on multiple levels with active involvement in dismantling racist structures while sharing of our time and food and beverages in relationship-building. It's never too late for the inbreaking of a more just world – we just have to re-imagine it and build it!