

## RACISM FUELED PANDEMIC

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Over these past long months in quarantine I have experienced and learned a lot about a lot of different people, and a lot about the world. One thing I can say that I learned between the global pandemic that is continuing to surge around the world, and social justice activism is that some people won't believe something is true until it happens or occurs within their own lives. What I mean is, some people are still not believing in the coronavirus and the impacts that it has had on many families around the world and the impact it has had on almost every person around the world in general. Similar to that of the coronavirus, people of color, mostly BIPOC, have had to constantly remind people and educate people on what's happening to black people every day. Whether it's systemic racism, police brutality, mass incarceration, etc. black people are always reminding people that even today these things are happening. But it still seems that no matter how many times black people tell their stories to people, or write books about it, make films about it, people still think that these struggles are just struggles of the past. So, when I saw the video of George Floyd and the amount of attention and activism that came after it, I was confused because I thought "Why now?" when this is what black people have been trying to show all along.

In March when everything really started to go downhill in America with the coronavirus, I was really scared. I was scared to leave the house, scared to sit on my porch, scared to shake hands with my sister. On the day that school got cancelled I was even more terrified because I felt sick. So, as you can imagine, I was searching about symptoms, asking my family and friends if I should be worried, applying hand sanitizer every five minutes ---- but it turns out that I just had the common cold. Now months have gone by since then and I'm still scared to go to the store, still checking the statistics every single day, still watching the news, I get terrified whenever I have to cough. When I see people calling the coronavirus a "hoax" I get confused, and angered because I keep seeing videos on social media of people sharing their confrontations that they've had with the virus, and many articles of people telling their stories. I keep wondering why these conspiracy theorists aren't seeing these videos too. These are the same people who walk around with no mask because "they can't breathe with it on" and are apathetic when people tell their stories about their family member that passed away due to the virus. Their family member that was coma induced, and ventilated, and still died because of the virus. No matter how many people fact check them and tell them to listen to the healthcare professionals they still don't listen... until it happens to them and their family, and that's when I saw an article posted entitled "Man thought Coronavirus was a 'hoax' has tested positive." That's when they listen and want to warn other people.

When online schooling was still in session my teacher posted the question "How are the COVID-19 protests similar to the Civil Rights protests?" and at first I thought it was dumb question. How was white people marching because they wanted haircuts and to go out for drinks during a global pandemic in any way similar to that of people marching so that they could be set free? But then I thought about it and I answered "people are ignorant of the issues until they see the issue firsthand." and we've been able to see this before our own eyes with the two biggest issues today, coronavirus and injustice. The issue of injustice all started back up when the video of Minneapolis police murdering an innocent black man, George Floyd, started showing up on people's timelines. People started to hit the streets shouting "No Justice, No Peace" in order to get justice for George Floyd. People started to make hashtags and posts to show their solidarity, people started to hold people accountable. While all of this was happening, I, as a black person, wondered why people had to see an innocent man being murdered in order to see that what we've been saying for hundreds of years is true. Black people shouldn't have to talk about the history of Emmett till, or Black Wall Street, or the MOVE bombing in order for Americans to know American history. Black people shouldn't have to tell people to support black businesses, we shouldn't have to post resources for black people, these things should already have been done. Similar to the coronavirus, people shouldn't have to get infected with the virus in order to see that the virus is real, especially after hearing stories of people losing loved ones.

Being in quarantine with all of this going on has been an eye opener for me. This generation and millennials are really changemakers and I think that's what we're doing now. We've been the ones marching in the streets, posting resources, telling people why it's important to wear masks, etc. and we're not stopping any time soon. There's still protests happening, petitions being signed, whether for injustices or for COVID-19 and being in this quarantine and experiencing all of these things has brought good into my life. It showed me what I can really do to help the world. You don't need a bunch of money or resources to make a change. A click of a button on your phone, a couple minutes to read an article, watching a video can bring many people relief and justice, and if I'm not doing anything while continuing to stay indoors, that's what I'll continue to do.

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